This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

EX LIBRIS
Dr. J. D. Budd

STANFORD UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
Gift of
Dr. J. D. Budd

52.02
I 66
8
p.2

STANFORD UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Gift of

Dr. J. D. Budd

VOLUME XXIV.

LIFE AND WORKS OF GOETHE

George Henry Lewes

Life of Goethe

BY

George Henry Lewes

In Two Volumes

Volume II.

Edited by Nathan Haskell Dole

STANFORD LIBRARY

Boston ✤ Francis A. Niccolls & Company ✤ *Publishers*

Leipzig Edition de Luxe

This Edition is Limited to One Hundred Copies, of which this is copy

No. 56

439773

Copyright, 1902
BY FRANCIS A. NICCOLLS & CO.

STANFORD LIBRARY

Colonial Press
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

Contents

CHAPTER		PAGE
	Book the Fifth (Continued)	
IV.	Preparations for Italy	8
V.	Italy	16
VI.	Egmont and Tasso	29
VII.	Return Home	40
VIII.	Christiane Vulpius	49
IX.	The Poet as a Man of Science	64
X.	The Campaign in France	121
	Book the Sixth. 1794 to 1805	
I.	Goethe and Schiller	143
II.	Wilhelm Meister	160
III.	The Romantic School	174
IV.	Hermann und Dorothea	183
V.	The Theatrical Manager	199
VI.	Schiller's Last Years	221
VII.	Faust	237
VIII.	The Lyrical Poems	284
	Book the Seventh. 1805 to 1832	
I.	The Battle of Jena	293
II.	Goethe's Wife	299
III.	Bettina and Napoleon	304
IV.	Elective Affinities	318
V.	Politics and Religion	328
VI.	The Activity of Age	349
VII.	The Second Part of "Faust"	371
VIII.	The Closing Scenes	384
	Appendix	399

List of Illustrations

PAGE

GOETHE AT ILMENAU (*See page 394*) . . . *Frontispiece*
PORTRAIT OF GOETHE 150
GOETHE'S INTERVIEW WITH NAPOLEON AT ERFURT . . 312
"THESE WERE THE SUBJECTS WHICH OCCUPIED HIS ACTIVITY" 358
"MORE LIGHT" 397

Book the Fifth

Continued

Life and Works of Goethe

CHAPTER IV.

PREPARATIONS FOR ITALY.

WITH the year 1783 we see him more and more seriously occupied. He has ceased to be "the Grand Master of all the Apes," and is deep in old books and archives. The birth of a crown prince came to fill Weimar with joy, and give the duke a sudden seriousness. The baptism, which took place on the 5th of February, was a great event in Weimar. Herder preached "like a God," said Wieland, whose cantata was sung on the occasion. Processions by torchlight, festivities of all kinds, poems from every poet, *except* Goethe, testified the people's joy. There is something very generous in this silence. It could not be attributed to want of affection. But he who had been ever ready with ballet, opera, or poem, to honour the birthday of the two duchesses, must have felt that now, when all the other Weimar writers were pouring in their offerings, he ought not to throw the weight of his position in the scale against them. Had his poem been the worst of the offerings, it would have been prized the highest because it was his.

The duke, proud in his paternity, writes to Merck: "You have reason to rejoice with me; for if there be

any good dispositions in me they have hitherto wanted a fixed point, but now there is a firm hook upon which I can hang my pictures. With the help of Goethe and good luck I will so paint that, if possible, the next generation shall say he too was a painter!" And from this time forward there seems to have been a decisive change in him; though he does complain of the "taciturnity of his *Herr Kammerpräsident*" (Goethe), who is only to be drawn out by the present of an engraving. In truth, this *Kammerpräsident* is very much oppressed with work, and lives in great seclusion, happy in love, active in study. The official duties, which formerly he undertook so gaily, are obviously becoming burdens to him, the more so now his mission rises into greater distinctness. The old desire for Italy begins to torment him. "The happiest thing is, that I can now say I am on the right path, and from this time forward nothing will be lost."

In his poem "Ilmenau," written in this year, Goethe vividly depicts the character of the duke, and the certainty of his metamorphosis. Having seen how he speaks of the duke, in his letters to the Frau von Stein, it will gratify the reader to observe that these criticisms were no "behind the back" carpings, but were explicitly expressed even in poetry. "The poem of Ilmenau," Goethe said to Eckermann, "contains in the form of an episode an epoch which in 1783, when I wrote it, had happened some years before; so that I could describe myself historically and hold a conversation with myself of former years. There occurs in it a night scene after one of the breakneck chases in the mountain. We had built ourselves at the foot of a rock some little huts, and covered them with fir branches, that we might pass the night on dry ground. Before the huts we burned several fires and cooked our game. Knebel, whose pipe was never cold, sat next to the fire, and enlivened the company with his

jokes, while the wine passed freely. Seckendorf had stretched himself against a tree and was humming all sorts of poetics. On one side lay the duke in deep slumber. I myself sat before him in the glimmering light of the coals, absorbed in various grave thoughts, suffering for the mischief which my writings had produced." The sketch of the duke is somewhat thus to be translated: "Who can tell the caterpillar creeping on the branch, of what its future food will be? Who can help the grub upon the earth to burst its shell? The time comes when it presses out and hurries winged into the bosom of the rose. Thus will the years bring *him* also the right direction of his strength. As yet, beside the deep desire for the True, he has a passion for Error. Temerity lures him too far, no rock is too steep, no path too narrow, peril lies at his side threatening. Then the wild unruly impulse hurries him to and fro, and from restless activity, he restlessly tries repose. Gloomily wild in happy days, free without being happy, he sleeps fatigued in body and soul, upon a rocky couch."

While we are at Ilmenau let us not forget the exquisite little poem written there this September, with a pencil, on the wall of that hut on the Gickelhahn, which is still shown to visitors:

"Ueber allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde;
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch."

He had many unpleasant hours as Controller of the Finances, striving in vain to make the duke keep within a prescribed definite sum for expenses; a thing always found next to impossible with princes (not

often possible with private men), and by no means accordant with our duke's temperament. "Goethe contrives to make the most sensible representations," Wieland writes to Merck, "and is indeed *l'honnête homme à la cour;* but suffers terribly in body and soul from the burdens which for our good he has taken on himself. It sometimes pains me to the heart to see how good a face he puts on while sorrow, like an inward worm, is silently gnawing him. He takes care of his health as well as he can, and indeed he has need of it." Reports of this seem to have reached the ear of his mother, and thus he endeavours to reassure her: "You have never known me strong in stomach and head; and that one must be serious with serious matters is in the nature of things, especially when one is thoughtful and desires the good and true. . . . I am, after my manner, tolerably well, am able to do all my work, to enjoy the intercourse of good friends, and still find time enough for all my favourite pursuits. I could not wish myself in a better place, now that I know the world and know how it looks behind the mountains. And you, on your side, content yourself with my existence, and should I quit the world before you, I have not lived to your shame; I leave behind me a good name and good friends, and thus you will have the consolation of knowing that *I am not entirely dead.* Meanwhile live in peace; fate may yet give us a pleasant old age, which we will also live through gratefully."

It is impossible not to read, beneath these assurances, a tone of sadness such as corresponds with Wieland's intimation. Indeed, the duke, anxious about his health, had urged him in the September of this year to make a little journey in the Harz. He went, accompanied by Fritz von Stein, the eldest son of his beloved, a boy of ten years of age, whom he loved and treated as a son. "Infinite was the love and care he

showed me," said Stein, when recording those happy days. He had him for months living under the same roof, taught him, played with him, formed him. His instinctive delight in children was sharpened by his love for this child's mother. A pretty episode in the many-coloured Weimar life, is this, of the care-worn minister and occupied student snatching some of the joys of paternity from circumstances, which had denied him wife and children.

The Harz journey restored his health and spirits: especially agreeable to him was his intercourse with Sömmering, the great anatomist, and other men of science. He returned to Weimar to continue "Wilhelm Meister," which was now in its fourth book; to continue his official duties; to see more and more of Herder, then writing his "Ideen;" and to sun himself in the smiles of his beloved.

The year 1784 begins with an alteration in the theatrical world. The Amateur Theatre, which has hitherto given them so much occupation and delight, is now closed. A regular troupe is engaged. For the birthday of the duchess, Goethe prepares the "Planet Dance," a masked procession; and prepares an oration for the Reopening of the Ilmenau mines, which must greatly have pleased him as the beginning of the fulfilment of an old wish. From his first arrival he had occupied himself with these mines, planning their being once more set working. After many difficulties, on the 24th of February this wish was realised. It is related of him, that on the occasion of this opening speech, made in presence of all the influential persons of the environs, he appeared to have well in his head all that he had written, for he spoke with remarkable fluency. All at once the thread was lost; he seemed to have forgotten what he had to say. "This," says the narrator, "would have thrown any one else into great embarrassment; but it was not so with him.

On the contrary, he looked for at least ten minutes steadily and quietly round the circle of his numerous audience; they were so impressed by his personal appearance, that during the very long and almost ridiculous pause every one remained perfectly quiet. At last he appeared to have again become master of his subject; he went on with his speech, and without hesitation continued it to the end as serenely as if nothing had happened."

His osteological studies brought him this year the discovery of an intermaxillary bone in man, as well as in animals.[1] In a future chapter[2] this discovery will be placed in its historical and anatomical light; what we have at present to do with it, is to recognise its biographical significance. Until this discovery was made, the position of man had always been separated from that of even the highest animals, by the fact (assumed) that he had *no* intermaxillary bone. Goethe, who everywhere sought unity in Nature, believed that such a difference did not exist; his researches proved him to be right. Herder was at that time engaged in proving that no structural difference could be found between men and animals; and Goethe, in sending Knebel his discovery, says that it will support this view. "Indeed, man is most intimately allied to animals. The coördination of the Whole makes every creature to be that which it is, and man is as much man through the form of his upper jaw, as through the form and nature of the last joint of his little toe. And thus is every creature but *a note of the great*

[1] He thus announces it to Herder, March 27, 1784: "I hasten to tell you of the fortune that has befallen me. I have found neither gold nor silver, but that which gives me inexpressible joy, the *os intermaxillare* in Man! I compared the skulls of men and beasts, in company with Loder, came on the trace of it, and see, there it is!" — *Aus Herder's Nachlass*, i. 75.

[2] See further on the chapter on "The Poet as a Man of Science."

harmony, which must be studied in the Whole, or else it is nothing but a dead letter. From this point of view I have written the little essay, and that is, properly speaking, the interest which lies hidden in it."

The discovery is significant, therefore, as an indication of his tendency to regard Nature in her unity. It was the prelude to his discoveries of the metamorphosis of plants, and of the vertebral theory of the skull: all three resting on the same mode of conceiving Nature. His botanical studies received fresh impulse at this period. Linnæus was a constant companion on his journeys, and we see him with eagerness availing himself of all that the observations and collections of botanists could offer him in aid of his own. "My geological speculations," he writes to the Frau von Stein, "make progress. I see much more than the others who accompany me, because I have discovered certain fundamental laws of formation, which I keep secret, and can from them better observe and judge the phenomena before me. . . . Every one exclaims about my solitude, which is a riddle, because no one knows with what glorious unseen beings I hold communion." It is interesting to observe his delight at seeing a zebra — which was a novelty in Germany — and his inexhaustible pleasure in the elephant's skull, which he had procured for study. Men confined to their libraries, whose thoughts scarcely venture beyond the circle of literature, have spoken with sarcasm, and with pity, of this waste of time. But — dead bones for dead bones — there is as much poetry in the study of an elephant's skull as in the study of those skeletons of the past — history and classics. All depends upon the mind of the student; to one man a few old bones will awaken thoughts of the great organic processes of Nature, thoughts as far-reaching and sublime as those which the fragments of the past awaken in the historical mind. Impressed with this conviction, the

great Bossuet left the brilliant court of Louis XIV. to shut himself up in the anatomical theatre of Duverney, that he might master the secrets of organisation before writing his treatise "De la Connaissance de Dieu."[1] But there are minds, and these form the majority, to whom dry bones are dry bones, and nothing more. "How legible the book of Nature becomes to me," Goethe writes, "I cannot express to thee; my long lessons in spelling have helped me, and now my quiet joy is inexpressible. Much as I find that is new, I find nothing unexpected; everything fits in, because I have no system, and desire nothing but the pure truth." To help him in his spelling he began algebra; but the nature of his mind was too unmathematical for him to pursue that study long.

Science and love were the two pillars of his existence in those days. "I feel that thou art always with me," he writes; "thy presence never leaves me. In thee I have a standard of all women, yea, of all men; in thy love I have a standard of fate. Not that it darkens the world to me; on the contrary, it makes the world clear; I see plainly how men are, think, wish, strive after, and enjoy; and I give every one his due, and rejoice silently in the thought that I possess so indestructible a treasure."

The duke increased his salary by two hundred thalers, and this, with the eighteen hundred thalers received from the paternal property, made his income now thirty-two hundred thalers. He had need of money, both for his purposes and his numerous charities. We have seen, in the case of Kraft, how large was his generosity; and in one of his letters to his beloved he exclaims, "God grant that I may daily become more economical, that I may be able to do more for others." The reader knows this is not a

[1] This work contains a little treatise on anatomy, which testifies to the patience of the theologian's study.

mere phrase thrown in the air. All his letters speak of the suffering he endured from the sight of so much want in the people. "The world is narrow," he writes, "and not every spot of earth bears every tree; mankind suffers, and *one is ashamed to see oneself so favoured above so many thousands.* We hear constantly how poor the land is, and daily becomes poorer; but we partly think this is not true, and partly hurry it away from our minds when once we see the truth with open eyes, see the irremediableness, and see how matters are always bungled and botched!" That he did his utmost to ameliorate the condition of the people in general, and to ameliorate particular sorrows as far as lay in his power, is strikingly evident in the concurrent testimony of all who knew anything of his doings. If he did not write dithyrambs of Freedom, and was not profoundly enthusiastic for Fatherland, let us attribute it to any cause but want of heart.

The stillness and earnestness of his life seem to have somewhat toned down the society of Weimar. He went very rarely to court; and he not being there to animate it with his inventions, the Duchess Amalia complained that they were all asleep; the duke also found society insipid: "the men have lived through their youth, and the women mostly married." The duke altered with the rest. The influence of his dear friend was daily turning him into more resolute paths; it had even led him to the study of science, as we learn from his letters. And Herder, also, now occupied with his great work, shared these ideas, and enriched himself with Goethe's friendship. Jacobi came to Weimar, and saw his old friend again, quitting him with real sorrow. He was occupied at this time with the dispute about Lessing's Spinozism, and tried to bring Goethe into it, who very characteristically told him, "Before I write a syllable *μετα τα φυσικα*, I must first have clearly settled my *φυσικα*." All contro-

versy was repugnant to Goethe's nature: he said, "If Raphael were to paint it, and Shakespeare dramatise it, I could scarcely find any pleasure in it." Jacobi certainly was not the writer to conquer such repugnance. Goethe objected to his tone almost as much as to his opinions. "When self-esteem expresses itself in contempt of another, be he the meanest, it must be repellant. A flippant, frivolous man may ridicule others, may controvert them, scorn them; but he who has any respect for himself seems to have renounced the right of thinking meanly of others. And what are we all that we can dare to raise ourselves to any height?" He looks upon Jacobi's metaphysical *tic* as a compensation for all the goods the gods have given him — "house, riches, children, sister and friends, and a long etc. On the other hand, God has punished you with metaphysics like a thorn in your flesh; me he has blessed with science, that I may be happy in the contemplation of his works." How characteristic is this: "When you say we can only *believe* in God (p. 101), I answer that I lay great stress on *seeing* (*schauen*), and when Spinoza, speaking of *scientia intuitiva*, says: *Hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adequata idea essentiæ formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adequatam cognitionem essentiæ rerum*, these few words give me courage to dedicate my whole life to the observation of things which I can reach, and of whose *essentiæ formalis* I can hope to form an adequate idea, without in the least troubling myself how far I can go." He was at variance, and justly, with those who called Spinoza an atheist. He called him the most theistical of theists, and the most Christian of Christians — *theissimum et christianissimum.*

While feeling the separation of opinion between himself and Jacobi, he still felt the sympathy of old friendship. It was otherwise with Lavater. Their intimacy had been great; no amount of difference had

overshadowed it, until the priestly element of Lavater, formerly in abeyance, grew into offensive prominence. He clouded his intellect with superstitions, and aspired to be a prophet. He had believed in Cagliostro and his miracles, exclaiming, "Who would be so great as he, had he but a true sense of the Evangelists?" He called upon that mystifier, in Strasburg, but was at once sent about his business. "When a great man," writes Goethe of Lavater, in 1782, "has a dark corner in him, it is terribly dark." And the dark corner in Lavater begins to make him uneasy. "I see the highest power of reason united in Lavater with the most odious superstition, and that by a knot of the finest and most inextricable kind." To the same effect he says in one of the Xenien:

"Wie verfährt die Natur um Hohes und Niedres im Menschen
Zu verbinden? sie stellt Eitelkeit zwischen hinein."

It was a perception of what he thought the hypocritical nature of Lavater which thoroughly disgusted him, and put an end to their friendship; mere difference of opinion never separated him from a friend.

His scientific studies became enlarged by the addition of a microscope, with which he followed the investigations of Gleichen, and gained some insight into the marvels of the world of Infusoria. His drawings of the animalcules seen by him were sent to the Frau von Stein; and to Jacobi he wrote: "Botany and the microscope are now the chief enemies I have to contend against. But I live in perfect solitude apart from all the world, as dumb as a fish." Amid these multiform studies, — mineralogy, osteology, botany, and constant "dipping" into Spinoza, his poetic studies might seem to have fallen into the background, did we not know that "Wilhelm Meister" has reached the fifth book, the opera of "Scherz, List und Rache" is written, the great religious-scientific poem "Die Geheimnisse" is

planned, "Elpenor" has two acts completed, and many of the minor poems are written. Among these poems, be it noted, are the two songs in "Wilhelm Meister," "Kennst du das Land" and "Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt," which speak feelingly of his longing for Italy. The preparations for that journey are made in silence. He is studying Italian, and undertakes the revision of his works for a new edition, in which Wieland and Herder are to help him.

Seeing him thus happy in love, in friendship, in work, with young Fritz living with him, to give him, as it were, a home, and every year bringing fresh clearness in his purposes, one may be tempted to ask what was the strong impulse which could make him break away from such a circle, and send him lonely over the Alps? Nothing but the gadfly of genius. Italy had been the dream of his youth. It was the land where self-culture was to gain rich material and firm basis. That he was born to be a Poet, he now deliberately acknowledged; and nothing but solitude in the Land of Song seemed wanting to him. Thither he yearned to go; thither he would go.

He accompanied the duke, Herder, and the Frau von Stein to Carlsbad in July, 1786, taking with him the works to be revised for Göschen's new edition. The very sight of these works must have strengthened his resolution. And when Herder and the Frau von Stein returned to Weimar, leaving him alone with the duke, the final preparations were made. He had studiously concealed this project from every one except the duke, whose permission was necessary; but even from him the project was partially concealed. "Forgive me," he wrote to the duke, "if at parting I spoke vaguely about my journey and its duration. I do not yet know myself what is to become of me. You are happy in a chosen path. Your affairs are in good order, and you will excuse me if I now look after

my own; nay, you have often urged me to do so. I am at this moment certainly able to be spared; things are so arranged as to go on smoothly in my absence. In this state of things all I ask is an indefinite furlough." He says that he feels it necessary for his intellectual health that he should "lose himself in a world where he is unknown;" and begs that no one may be informed of his intended absence. "God bless you, is my hearty wish, and keep me your affection. Believe me that if I desire to make my existence more complete, it is that I may enjoy it better with you and yours."

This was on the 2d September, 1786. On the 3d he quitted Carlsbad incognito. His next letter to the duke begins thus: "One more friendly word out of the distance, without date or place. Soon will I open my mouth and say how I get on. How it will rejoice me once more to see your handwriting." And it ends thus: "Of course you let people believe that you know where I am." In the next letter he says, "I must still keep the secret of my whereabouts a little longer."

CHAPTER V.

ITALY.

THE long yearning of his life was at last fulfilled: he was in Italy. Alone, and shrouded by an assumed name from all the interruptions with which the curiosity of admirers would have perplexed the author of "Werther," but which never troubled the supposed merchant Herr Möller, he passed amid orange-trees and vineyards, cities, statues, pictures, and buildings, feeling himself "at home in the wide world, no longer an exile." The passionate yearnings of Mignon had grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength, through the early associations of childhood, and all the ambitions of manhood, till at last they made him sick at heart. For some time previous to his journey he had been unable to look at engravings of Italian scenery, unable even to open a Latin book, because of the overpowering suggestions of the language; so that Herder could say of him that the only Latin author ever seen in his hand was Spinoza. The feeling grew and grew, a mental home-sickness which nothing but Italian skies could cure. We have only to read Mignon's song, "Kennst du das Land," which was written before this journey, to perceive how trance-like were his conceptions of Italy, and how restless was his desire to journey there.

And now this deep unrest was stilled. Italian voices were loud around him, Italian skies were above him, Italian ART was before him. He felt this journey

was a new birth. His whole being was filled with warmth and light. Life stretched itself before him calm, radiant, and strong. He saw the greatness of his aims, and felt within him powers adequate to those aims.

He has written an account of his journey; but although he might have produced a great work, had he deliberately set himself to do so, and although some passages of this work are among the most delightful of the many pages written about Italy, yet the "Italiänische Reise" is, on the whole, a very disappointing book. Nor could it well have been otherwise, under the circumstances. It was not written soon after his return, when all was fresh in his memory, and when his style had still its warmth and vigour; but in the decline of his great powers he collected the hasty letters sent from Italy to the Frau von Stein, Herder, and others, and from them he extracted such passages as seemed suitable, weaving them together with no great care or enthusiasm. Had he simply printed the letters themselves, they would doubtless have given us a far more vivid and interesting picture; in the actual form of the work we are wearied by various trifles and incidents of the day circumstantially narrated, which in letters would not improperly find a place, but which here want the pleasant, careless, chatty form given by correspondence. The "Italiänische Reise" wants the charm of a collection of letters, and the solid excellence of a deliberate work. It is mainly interesting as indicating the effect of Italy on his mind; an effect apparently too deep for utterance. He was too completely possessed by the new life which streamed through him, to bestow much time in analysing and recording his impressions.

Curious it is to notice his open-eyed interest in all, the geological and meteorological phenomena which present themselves; an interest which has excited the

sneers of some who think a poet has nothing better to do than to rhapsodise. They tolerate his enthusiasm for Palladio, because Architecture is one of the Arts; and forgive the enthusiasm which seized him in Vicenza and made him study Palladio's works as if he were about to train himself for an architect; but they are distressed to find him in Padua, once more occupied with "cabbages," and tormented with the vague conception of a Typical Plant, which will not leave him. Let me confess, however, that some cause for disappointment exists. The poet's yearning is fulfilled; and yet how little literary enthusiasm escapes him! Italy is the land of History, Literature, Painting, and Music; its highways are sacred with associations of the Past; its byways are centres of biographic and artistic interest. Yet Goethe, in raptures with the climate, and the beauties of Nature, is almost silent about Literature, has no sense of Music, and no feeling for History. He passes through Verona without a thought of Romeo and Juliet; through Ferrara without a word of Ariosto, and scarcely a word of Tasso. In this land of the Past, it is Present only which allures him. He turns aside in disgust from the pictures of crucifixions, martyrdoms, emaciated monks, and all the hospital pathos which makes galleries hideous; only in Raphael's healthier beauty, and more human conceptions, can he take delight. He has no historic sense enabling him to qualify his hatred of superstition by recognition of the painful religious struggles, which in their evolutions assumed these superstitious forms. He considers the pictures as things of the present, and because their motives are hideous he is disgusted; but a man of more historic feeling would, while marking his dislike of such conceptions, have known how to place them in their serial position in the historic development of mankind.

It is not for Literature, it is not for History, it is

not for poetical enthusiasm, we must open the "Italiänische Reise." There is no eloquence in the book; no, not even when, at Venice, he first stands in presence of the sea. Think of the feelings which the first sight of the sea must call up in the mind of a poet, and then marvel at this reserve. But if the "Italiänische Reise" does not flash out in eloquence, it is everywhere warm with the intense happiness of the writer. In Venice, for example, his enjoyment seems to have been great, as every hour the place ceased to be a *name* and became a *picture*. The canals, lagoons, narrow streets, splendid architecture, and animated crowds, were inexhaustible delights. From Venice he passed rapidly through Ferrara, Bologna, Florence, Arezzo, Perugiä, Foligno, and Spoleto, reaching Rome on the 28th October.

In Rome, where he stayed four months, enjoyment and education went hand in hand. "All the dreams of my youth I now see living before me. Everywhere I go I find an old familiar face; everything is just what I thought it, and yet everything is new. It is the same with ideas. I have gained no new idea, but the old ones have become so definite, living, and connected one with another, that they may pass as new." The riches of Rome are at first bewildering; a long residence is necessary for each object to make its due impression. Goethe lived there among some German artists: Angelica Kaufmann, for whom he had great regard, Tischbein, Moritz, and others. They respected his incognito as well as they could, although the fact of his being in Rome could not long be entirely concealed. He gained, however, the main object of his incognito, and avoided being lionised. He had not come to Italy to have his vanity tickled by the approbation of society; he came for self-culture, and resolutely pursued his purpose.

Living amid such glories of the past, treading each

day the ground of the Eternal City, every breath from the Seven Hills must have carried to him some thought of history. "Even Roman antiquities," he writes, "begin to interest me. History, inscriptions, coins, which hitherto I never cared to hear about, now press upon me. Here one reads history in quite another spirit than elsewhere; not only Roman history, but world history." Yet I do not find that he read much history, even here. Art was enough to occupy him; and for Painting he had a passion which renders his want of talent still more noticeable. He visited churches and galleries with steady earnestness; studied Winckelmann, and discussed critical points with the German artists. Unhappily he also wasted precious time in fruitless efforts to attain facility in drawing. These occupations, however, did not prevent his completing the versification of "Iphigenia," which he read to the German circle, but found only Angelica who appreciated it; the others having expected something *genialisch*, something in the style of "Götz with the Iron Hand." Nor was he much more fortunate with the Weimar circle, who, as we have already seen, preferred the prose version.

Art thus with many-sided influence allures him, but does not completely fill up his many-sided activity. Philosophic speculations give new and wondrous meanings to Nature; and the ever-pressing desire to discover the secret of vegetable forms sends him meditative through the gardens about Rome. He feels he is on the track of a law which, if discovered, will reduce to unity the manifold variety of forms. Men who have never felt the passion of discovery may rail at him for thus, in Rome, forgetting, among plants, the quarrels of the Senate and the eloquence of Cicero; but all who have been haunted by a great idea will sympathise with him, and understand how insignificant is the existence of a thousand Ciceros in comparison with a law of Nature.

Among the few acquaintances he made, let us note that of Monti the poet, at the performance of whose tragedy, "Aristodemo," he assisted. Through this acquaintance he was reluctantly induced to allow himself to be enrolled a member of the Arcadia,[1] under the title of "Megalio," "*per causa della grandezza*, or rather *grandiosità delle mie opere*, as they express it."

And what said Weimar to this prolonged absence of its poet? Instead of rejoicing in his intense enjoyment, instead of sympathising with his aims, Weimar grumbled and gossiped, and was loud in disapprobation of his neglect of duties at home, while wandering among ruins and statues. Schiller, who had meanwhile come to Weimar, sends to Körner the echo of these grumblings. "Poor Weimar! Goethe's return is uncertain, and many here look upon his eternal separation from all business as decided. While he is painting in Italy, the Vogts and Schmidts must work for him like beasts of burden. He spends in Italy for doing nothing a salary of eighteen hundred dollars, and they, for half that sum, must do double work." One reads such sentences from Schiller with pain; and there are several other passages in the correspondence which betray a jealousy of his great rival, explicable, perhaps, by the uneasy, unhappy condition in which he then struggled, but which gives his admirers pain. This jealousy we shall hereafter see openly and even fiercely avowed.

While Weimar grumbled, Weimar's duke in truer sympathy wrote affectionately to him, releasing him from all official duties, and extending the leave of absence as long as it might be desired. Without Goethe, Weimar must indeed have been quite another place to Karl August; but no selfishness made him

[1] This is erroneously placed by him during his second residence in Rome. His letter to Fritz von Stein, however, gives the true date.

desire to shorten his friend's stay in Italy. Accordingly, on the 22d of February, Goethe quitted Rome for Naples, where he spent five weeks of hearty enjoyment. Throwing aside his incognito, he mixed freely with society, and still more freely with the people, whose happy careless *far niente* delighted him. He there made the acquaintance of Sir William Hamilton, and saw the lovely Lady Hamilton, the siren whose beauty led the noble Nelson astray. Goethe was captivated by her grace as she moved through the mazes of the shawl dance she made famous. He was also captivated in quite another manner by the writings of Vico, which had been introduced to him by his acquaintance Filangieri, who spoke of the great thinker with southern enthusiasm.

"If in Rome one must *study*," he writes, "here in Naples one can only *live*." And he lived a manifold life: on the seashore, among the fishermen, among the people, among the nobles, under Vesuvius, on the moonlit waters, on the causeway of Pompeii in Pausilippo — everywhere drinking in fresh delight, everywhere feeding his fancy and experience with new pictures. Thrice did he ascend Vesuvius; and as we shall see him during the campaign in France pursuing his scientific observations undisturbed by the cannon, so here also we observe him deterred by no perils from making the most of his opportunity. Nor is this the only noticeable trait. Vesuvius could make him forget in curiosity his personal safety, but it did not excite one sentence of poetry. His description is as quiet as if Vesuvius were Hampstead Heath.

The enthusiasm breaks out, however, here and there. At Pæstum he was in raptures with the glorious antique temples, the remains of which still speak so eloquently of what Grecian art must have been.

Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Capua interested him less than might have been anticipated. "The book of

Nature," he says, "is after all the only one which has in every page important meanings." It was a book which fastened him as fairy tales fasten children. Wandering thus lonely, his thoughts hurried by the music of the waves, the long-baffling, long-soliciting mystery of vegetable forms grew into clearness before him, and the typical plant was no more a vanishing conception but a principle clearly grasped.

On the 2d of April he reached Palermo. He stayed a fortnight among its orange-trees and oleanders, given up to the exquisite sensations which, lotus-like, lulled him into forgetfulness of everything, save the present. Homer here first became a living poet to him. He bought a copy of the Odyssey, read it with unutterable delight, and translated as he went, for the benefit of his friend Kniep. Inspired by it, he sketched the plan of "Nausikāa," a drama in which the Odyssey was to be concentrated. Like so many other plans, this was never completed. The garden of Alcinous had to yield to the "Metamorphoses of Plants," which tyrannously usurped his thoughts.

Palermo was the native city of Count Cagliostro, the audacious adventurer who, three years before, had made so conspicuous a figure in the affair of the Diamond Necklace. Goethe's curiosity to see the parents of this reprobate led him to visit them, under the guise of an Englishman bringing them news of their son. He has narrated the adventure at some length; but as nothing of biographical interest lies therein, I pass on with this brief indication, adding that his sympathy, always active, was excited in favour of the poor people, and he twice sent them pecuniary assistance, confessing the deceit he had practised.

He returned to Naples on the 14th of May, not without a narrow escape from shipwreck. He had taken with him the two first acts of "Tasso" (then in prose), to remodel them in verse. He found, on reading them

over, that they were soft and vague in expression, but otherwise needing no material alteration. After a fortnight at Naples, he once more arrived in Rome. This was on the 6th of June, 1787, and he remained till the 22d of April, 1788: ten months of labour, which only an activity so unusual as his own could have made so fruitful. Much of his time was wasted in the dabbling of an amateur, striving to make himself what Nature had refused to make him. Yet it is perhaps perilous to say that with such a mind any effort was fruitless. If he did not become a painter by his studies, the studies were doubtless useful to him in other ways. Art and antiquities he studied in company with artistic friends. Rome is itself an education; and he was eager to learn. Practice of the art sharpened his perceptions. He learned perspective, drew from the model, was passionate in endeavours to succeed with landscape, and even began to model a little in clay. Angelica Kaufmann told him that in Art he *saw* better than any one else; and the others believed perhaps that with study he would be able to do more than see. But all his study and all his practice were vain; he never attained even the excellence of an amateur. To think of a Goethe thus obstinately cultivating a branch of art for which he had no talent, makes us look with kinder appreciation on the spectacle, so frequently presented, of really able men obstinately devoting themselves to produce poetry which no cultivated mind can read; men whose culture and insight are insufficient to make them perceive in themselves the difference between aspiration and inspiration.

If some time was wasted upon efforts to become a painter, the rest was well employed. Not to mention his scientific investigations, there was abundance of work executed. "Egmont" was rewritten. The rough draft of the two first acts had been written at Frankfort, in the year 1775; and a rough cast of the whole

was made at Weimar, in 1782. He now took it up again, because the outbreak of troubles in the Netherlands once more brought the patriots into collision with the House of Orange. The task of rewriting was laborious, but very agreeable, and he looked with pride on the completed drama, hoping it would gratify his friends. These hopes were somewhat dashed by Herder, who — never much given to praise — would not accept Clärchen, a character which the poet thought, and truly thought, he had felicitously drawn. Besides "Egmont," he prepared for the new edition of his works, new versions of "Claudine von Villa Bella" and "Erwin und Elmire," two comic operas. Some scenes of "Faust" were written; also these poems: "Amor als Landschaftsmaler;" "Amor als Gast;" "Künstlers Erdenwallen;" and "Künstler's Apotheose." He thus completed the last four volumes of his collected works which Göschen had undertaken to publish, and which we have seen him take to Carlsbad and to Italy, as his literary task.

The effect of his residence in Italy, especially in Rome, was manifold and deep. Foreign travel, even to unintelligent, uninquiring minds, is always of great influence, not merely by the presentation of new objects, but also, and mainly, by the withdrawal of the mind from all the intricate connections of habit and familiarity which mask the real relations of life. This withdrawal is important, because it gives a new standing-point from which we can judge ourselves and others, and it shows how much that we have been wont to regard as essential is, in reality, little more than routine. Goethe certainly acquired clearer views with respect to himself and his career; severed from all those links of habit and routine which had bound him in Weimar, he learned in Italy to take another and a wider survey of his position. He returned home, to all appearance, a changed man. The crystallising

process which commenced in Weimar was completed in Rome. As a decisive example, we note that he there finally relinquishes his attempt to become a painter. He feels that he is born only for poetry, and during the next ten years resolves to devote himself to literature.

One result of his study of art was to reconcile his theories and his tendencies. We have noted on several occasions the objective tendency of his mind, and we now find him recognising that tendency as dominant in ancient art. "Let me," he writes to Herder, "express my meaning in a few words. The ancients represented *existences*, we usually represent the *effect*; they portrayed the terrible, we terribly; they the agreeable, we agreeably, and so forth. Hence our exaggeration, mannerism, false graces, and all excesses. For when we strive after effect, we never think we can be effective enough." This admirable sentence is as inaccurate in an historical, as it is accurate in an æsthetical sense; unless by the ancients we understand only Homer and some pieces of sculpture. As a criticism of Æschylus, Euripides, Pindar, Theocritus, Horace, Ovid, or Catullus, it is quite wide of the truth; indeed, it is merely the traditional fiction current about ancient art, which vanishes on a steady gaze; but inaccurate though it be, it serves to illustrate Goethe's theories. If he found *that* in Italy, it was because that best assimilated with his own tendencies, which were eminently concrete. "People talk of the study of the ancients," he says somewhere, "but what does it mean, except that we should look at the real world, and strive to express it, for that is what they did." And to Eckermann he said: "All eras in a state of decline are subjective; on the other hand, all progressive eras have an objective tendency. Our present time is retrograde, for it is subjective." Here in Rome he listens to his critical friends with a quiet smile, "when in

metaphysical discussions they held me not competent. I, being an artist, regard this as of little moment. Indeed, I prefer that the principle from which and through which I work should be hidden from me." How few Germans could say this; how few could say with him, "*Ich habe nie über das Denken gedacht;* I have never thought about Thought."

Leaving all such generalities, and descending once more to biographic detail, we meet Goethe again in the toils of an unhappy passion. How he left the Frau von Stein we have seen. Her image accompanied him everywhere. To her he wrote constantly. But he has before confessed that he loved her less when absent from her, and the length of his absence now seems to have cooled his ardour. He had been a twelvemonth away from her, when the charms of a young Milanese, with whom he was thrown together in Castel Gandolfo, made him forget the coldness, almost approaching to rudeness, with which hitherto he had guarded himself from female fascination. With the rashness of a boy he falls in love, and then learns that his mistress is already betrothed. I am unable to tell this story with any distinctness, for he was nearly eighty years old when he wrote the pretty but vague account of it in the "Italiänische Reise," and there are no other sources come to hand. Enough that he loved, learned she was betrothed, and withdrew from her society to live down his grief. During her illness, which followed upon an unexplained quarrel with her betrothed, he was silently assiduous in attentions; but although they met after her recovery, and she was then free, I do not find him taking any steps toward replacing the husband she had lost. As may be supposed, the tone of his letters to the Frau von Stein became visibly altered: they became less confidential and communicative; a change which did not escape her.

With Herder his correspondence continues affec-

tionate. Pleasant it is to see the enthusiasm with which he receives Herder's "Ideen," and reads it in Rome with the warmest admiration; so different from the way in which Herder receives what *he* sends from Rome!

On the 22d April, 1788, he turned homewards, quitting Rome with unspeakable regret, yet feeling himself equipped anew for the struggle of life. "The chief objects of my journey," he writes to the duke, "were these: to free myself from the physical and moral uneasiness which rendered me almost useless, and to still the feverish thirst I felt for true art. The first of these is tolerably, the second quite achieved." Taking "Tasso" with him to finish on his journey, he returned through Florence, Milan, Chiavenna, Lake Constance, Stuttgart, and Nürnberg, reaching Weimar on the 18th June, at ten o'clock in the evening.[1]

[1] It will be seen from this route that he never was in Genoa; consequently the passage in Schiller's correspondence with Körner (vol. iv. p. 59), wherein a certain G. is mentioned as having an unhappy attachment to an artist's model, cannot allude to Goethe. Indeed, the context, and Körner's reply, would make this plain to any critical sagacity; but many writers on Goethe are so ready to collect scandals without scrutiny, that this warning is not superfluous. Vehse, for instance, in his work on the court of Weimar, has not the slightest misgiving about the G. meaning Goethe; it never occurs to him to inquire whether Goethe ever was in Genoa, or whether the dates of these letters do not point unmistakably in another direction.

CHAPTER VI.

EGMONT AND TASSO.

THERE are men whose conduct we cannot approve, but whom we love more than many whose conduct is thoroughly admirable. When severe censors point out the sins of our favourites, reason may acquiesce, but the heart rebels. We make no protest, but in secret we keep our love unshaken. It is with poems as with men. The greatest favourites are not the least amenable to criticism; the favourites with Criticism are not the darlings of the public. In saying this we do not stultify Criticism, any more than Morality is stultified in our love of agreeable rebels. In both cases admitted faults are cast into the background by some energetic excellence.

"Egmont" is such a work. It is far, very far, from a masterpiece, but it is a universal favourite. As a tragedy, criticism makes sad work with it; but when all is said, the reader thinks of Egmont and Clärchen, and flings criticism to the dogs. These are the figures which remain in the memory: bright, genial, glorious creatures, comparable to any to be found in the long galleries of Art.

As a drama — *i. e.* a work constructed with a view to representation — it wants the two fundamental requisites, viz., a collision of elemental passions, from whence the tragic interest should spring; and the construction of its materials into the dramatic form. The first fault lies in the conception; the second in the

execution. The one is the error of the dramatic poet; the other of the dramatist. Had Shakespeare treated this subject, he would have thrown a life and character into the mobs, and a passionate movement into the great scenes, which would have made the whole live before our eyes. But I do not think he would have surpassed Egmont and Clärchen.

The slow, languid movement of this piece, which makes the representation somewhat tedious, does not lie in the length of the speeches and scenes, so much as in the undramatic construction. Julian Schmidt has acutely remarked: "A dramatic intention hovered before him, but he executed it in a lyrical musical style. Thus in the interview between Egmont and Orange, the two declaim against each other, instead of working on each other." It is in certain passages dramatic, but the whole is undramatic. It is more like a novel in dialogue.

Schiller, in his celebrated review of this work, praises the art with which the local colouring of History is preserved; but most people would willingly exchange this historical colouring for some touches of dramatic movement. The merit, such as it is, belongs to erudition, not to poetry; for the local colour is not, as in "Götz," and in Scott's romances, vivid enough to place the epoch before our eyes. Schiller, on the other hand, objects to the departure from History, in making Egmont unmarried, and to the departure from heroic dignity in making him in love. Goethe of course knew that Egmont had a wife and several children. He rejected such historical details; and although I am disposed to agree with Schiller, that by the change he deprived himself of some powerful dramatic situations, I still think he did right in making the change.

In the first place, it has given us the exquisite character of Clärchen, the gem of the piece. In the next place, it is dubious whether he would have treated the

powerful situations with the adequate dramatic intensity. He knew and confessed that his genius was not tragic. "I was not born for a tragic poet," he wrote to Zelter; "my nature is too conciliating; hence no really tragic situation interests me, for it is in its essence irreconcilable."

The character of Egmont is that of a healthy, noble, heroic man; and it is his humanity which the poet wishes to place before us. We are made spectators of a happy nature, not of great actions; the hero, for he is one, presents himself to us in his calm strength, perfect faculties, joyous, healthy freedom of spirit, loving, generous disposition; not in the hours of strenuous conflict, not in the spasms of his strength, not in the altitude of momentary exultation, but in the quiet strength of permanent power. This presentation of the character robs the story of its dramatic collision. The tendency of Goethe's mind, which made him look upon men rather as a naturalist than as a dramatist, led him to prefer delineating a character, to delineating a *passion;* and his biographical tendency made him delineate Egmont as more like what Wolfgang Goethe would have been under the same circumstances. This same tendency to draw from his own experience also led him to create Clärchen. Rosenkranz, indeed, seeking to show the profound historical conception of this work, says that the love for Clärchen was necessary "as an indication of Egmont's sympathy with the people;" but the reason seems to me to have been less critical, and more biographical.

It is a sombre and a tragic episode in history which is treated in this piece. The revolution of the Netherlands was one imperiously commanded by the times; it was the revolt of citizens against exasperating oppression; of conscience against religious tyranny; of the nation against a foreigner. The Duke of Alva, who thought it better the emperor should lose the

Netherlands than rule over a nation of heretics, but who was by no means willing that the Netherlands should be lost, came to replace the Duchess of Parma in the regency; came to suppress with the sword and scaffold the rebellion of the heretics. The strong contrast of Spaniard and Hollander, of Catholic and Protestant, of despotism and liberty, which this subject furnished, are all *indicated* by Goethe; but he has not used them as powerful dramatic elements. The characters talk, talk well, talk lengthily; they do not act. In the course of their conversations we are made aware of the state of things; we do not dramatically assist at them.

"Egmont" opens with a scene between soldiers and citizens, shooting at a mark. A long conversation lets us into the secret of the unquiet state of the country, and the various opinions afloat. Compare it with analogous scenes in Shakespeare, and the difference between dramatic and non-dramatic treatment will be manifest. Here the men are puppets; we see the author's *intention* in all they say; in Shakespeare the men betray themselves, each with some peculiar trick of character.

The next scene is still more feeble. The Duchess of Parma and Machiavelli are in conversation. She asks his counsel: he advises tolerance, which she feels to be impossible. Except in the casual indication of two characters, the whole of this scene is unnecessary: and indeed Schiller, in his adaptation of this play to the stage, lopped away the character of the duchess altogether, as an excrescence.

The free, careless, unsuspicious nature of Egmont is well contrasted with that of the suspicious Orange; his character is painted by numerous vivid touches, and we are in one scene made aware of the danger he is in. But the scene ends as it began, in talk. The next scene introduces Clärchen and her unhappy lover

Brackenburg. Very pretty is this conception of his patient love, and her compassion for the love she cannot share:

"*Mother.* Do you send him away so soon?

Clärchen. I long to know what is going on; and besides — do not be angry with me, mother — his presence pains me. I never know how I ought to behave toward him. I have done him a wrong, and it goes to my very heart to see how deeply he feels it. Well — it can't be helped now.

Mother. He is such a true-hearted fellow!

Clärchen. I cannot help it, I must treat him kindly. *Often without a thought I return the gentle, loving pressure of his hand.* I reproach myself that I am deceiving him, that I am nourishing a vain hope in his heart. I am in a sad plight. God knows I do not willingly deceive him. *I do not wish him to hope, yet I cannot let him despair.*"

Is not that taken from the life, and is it not exquisitely touched?

"*Clärchen.* I loved him once, and in my soul I love him still. I could have married him; yet I believe I never was really and passionately in love with him.

Mother. You would have been happy with him.

Clärchen. I should have been provided for, and led a quiet life.

Mother. And it has all been trifled away by your folly.

Clärchen. I am in a strange position. When I think how it has come about, I know it indeed, and yet I know it not. *But I have only to look on Egmont, and all becomes clear to me;* yes, then even stranger things would seem quite natural. Oh, what a man he is! The provinces worship him. And in his arms am I not the happiest being alive?

Mother. And the future?

Clärchen. I ask but this — does he love me? *Does* he love me — as if there could be a doubt!"

There are reminiscences of Frederika in this simple, loving Clärchen, and in the picture of her devotion to the man so much above her. This scene, however, though very charming, is completely without onward movement. It is talk, not action; and the return of

Brackenburg at the close, with his despairing monologue, is not sufficient for the termination of an act.

In act second we see the citizens again; they are becoming more unruly as events advance. Vanzen comes to stir their rebellious feelings; a quarrel ensues, which is quieted by the appearance of Egmont, who, on hearing their complaints, advises them to be prudent. "Do what you can to keep the peace; you stand in bad repute already. Provoke not the king still further. The power is in his hands. An honest citizen who maintains himself industriously has everywhere as much freedom as he needs." He quits them promising to do his utmost for them, advising them to stand against the new doctrines, and not to attempt to secure privileges by sedition. The people's hero is no demagogue. He opposes the turbulence of the mob, as he opposes the tyranny of the crown. In the next scene we have him with his secretary; and here are further manifested the kindness and the *insouciance* of his nature. "It is my good fortune that I am joyous, live fast, and take everything easily. I would not barter it for a tomb-like security. My blood rebels against this Spanish mode of life, nor are my actions to be regulated by the cautious measure of the court. Do I live only to think of life? Shall I forego the enjoyment of the present moment that I may secure the next, which, when it arrives, must be consumed in idle fears and anxieties?" This is not the language of a politician, but of a happy man. "Take life too seriously, and what is it worth? If the morning wake us to no new joys, if the evening bring us not the hope of new pleasures, is it worth while to dress and undress? Does the sun shine on me to-day that I may reflect on yesterday? That I may endeavour to foresee and to control what can neither be foreseen nor controlled — the destiny of to-morrow?" The present is enough for him. "The sunsteeds of Time, as if goaded by invisible spirits, bear

onward the light car of Destiny. Nothing remains for us but, with calm self-possession, firmly to grasp the reins, and guide the car now right, now left, here from the precipice, there from the rock. Who knows Whither he is hasting? Who reflects from Whence he came?"

Very poetic, and tragic too, is this contrast of character with circumstance. We know the peril which threatens him. We feel that this serenity is in itself the certain cause of his destruction; and it affects us like the joyousness of Romeo, who, the moment before he hears the terrible news of Juliet's death, feels "his bosom's lord sit lightly on its throne." In the scene which follows between Egmont and Orange, there is a fine argumentative exposition of their separate views of the state of affairs; Orange warns him to fly while there is yet safety; but he sees that flight will hasten civil war, and he remains.

Act the third once more brings the duchess and Machiavelli before us, and once more they talk about the troubles of the time. The scene changes to Clärchen's house, and we are spectators of that exquisite interview which Scott has borrowed in "Kenilworth," where Leicester appears to Amy Robsart in all his princely splendour. Beautiful as this scene is, it is not enough to constitute one act of a drama, especially the *third* act; for nothing is done in it, nothing is indicated even in the development of the story which had not been indicated before; the action stands still that we may see childish delight, womanly love, and manly tenderness.

The poetic reader, captivated by this scene, will be impatient at the criticism which espies a fault in it, and will declare such a picture infinitely superior to any dramatic effect. "What pedantry," he will exclaim, "to talk of technical demands in presence of a scene like this!" and with a lofty wave of the hand dismiss the critic into contempt. Nevertheless, the critic is

forced by his office to consider what are the technical demands. If the poet has attempted a drama, he must be tried by dramatic standards. However much we may delight in the picture Goethe has presented in this third act, we cannot but feel that Shakespeare, while giving the picture, would have made it subservient to the progress and development of the piece; for Shakespeare was not only a poet, he was also a dramatic poet.

Act the fourth again shows us citizens talking about the time, which grow more and more ominous. In the next scene Alva, the terrible Alva, appears, having laid all his plans. Orange has fled, but Egmont comes. A long discussion, very argumentative but utterly undramatic, between Alva and Egmont, is concluded by the arrest of the latter.

Act the fifth shows us Clärchen in the streets trying to rouse Brackenburg and the citizens to revolt and to the rescue of Egmont. There is great animation in this scene, wherein love raises the simple girl into the heroine. The citizens are alarmed, and dread to hear Egmont named.

"*Clärchen.* Stay! stay! Shrink not away at the sound of his name, to meet whom ye were wont to press forward so joyously! When rumour announced his approach, when the cry arose, 'Egmont comes! he comes from Ghent!' then happy were they who dwelt in the streets through which he was to pass. And when the neighing of his steed was heard, did not every one throw aside his work, while a ray of hope and joy, like a sunbeam from his countenance, stole over the toil-worn faces which peered from every window. Then as ye stood in doorways ye would lift up your children and pointing to him exclaim, 'See! that is Egmont! he who towers above the rest! 'Tis from him ye must look for better times than those your poor fathers have known!'"

Clärchen, unable to rouse the citizens, is led home by Brackenburg. The scene changes to Egmont's prison, where he soliloquises on his fate; the scene again

changes, and shows us Clärchen waiting with sickly impatience for Brackenburg to come and bring her the news. He comes; tells her Egmont is to die; she takes poison, and Brackenburg, in despair, resolves also to die. The final scene is very weak, and very long. Egmont has an interview with Alva's son, whom he tries to persuade into aiding him to escape; failing in this, he goes to sleep on a couch, and Clärchen appears in a vision as the figure of Liberty. She extends to him a laurel crown. He wakes — to find the prison filled with soldiers who lead him to execution.

There are great inequalities in this work, and some disparities of style. It was written at three different periods of his life; and although, when once completed, a work may benefit by careful revision extending over many years, it will inevitably suffer from fragmentary composition; the delay which favours revision is fatal to composition. A work of Art should be completed before the paint has had time to dry; otherwise the changes brought by time in the development of the artist's mind will make themselves felt in the heterogeneous structure of the work. "Egmont" was conceived in the period when Goethe was under the influence of Shakespeare; it was mainly executed in the period when he had taken a classical direction. It wants the stormy life of "Götz," and the calm beauty of "Iphigenie." Schiller thought the close was too much in the opera style; and Gervinus thinks that preoccupation with the opera, which Goethe at this period was led into by his friendly efforts to assist Kayser, has given the whole work an operatic turn. I confess I do not detect this; but I see a decided deficiency in dramatic construction, which is also to be seen in all his later works; and that he really did not know what the drama required, to *be* a drama as well as a poem, we shall see clearly illustrated in a future chapter. Nevertheless, I end as I began with saying

that, find what fault you will with "Egmont," it still remains one of those general favourites against which criticism is powerless.

Still less satisfactory from the dramatic point of view is "Tasso;" of which we may say what Johnson says of "Comus," "it is a series of faultless lines, but no drama." Indeed, for the full enjoyment of this exquisite poem, it is necessary that the reader should approach it as he approaches "Comus," or "Manfred," or "Philip von Artevelde," with no expectations of finding in it the qualities of "Othello," or "Wallenstein." It has a charm which few can resist; but it wants all the requisites of stage representation. There is scarcely any action; and what little there is only serves as a vehicle of struggle which goes on in Tasso's mind, instead of the struggle and collision of two minds. Even the dramatic elements of love and madness are not dramatically treated. We feel their presence in Tasso's mind; we never see their flaming energy fusing the heterogeneous materials of circumstance into fiery unity; we are thus spectators of a disease, not of an acted story. Hence the beauty of this work lies in its poetry, and cannot be reproduced in a translation.

The moment chosen by Goethe is when Tasso, having just completed his "Jerusalem Delivered," gives unmistakable signs of the unhappy passion and unhappy malady which have made his biography one of the saddest in the sad list of "mighty poets in their misery dead." German critics have affirmed that the piece is saturated with historical facts and local colour. But it is clear that great liberties have been taken both with history and local colour. Indeed, there was too obvious a superficial resemblance between the position of Tasso at the Court of Ferrara and Goethe at the Court of Weimar not to make these liberties necessary. Had Goethe painted the actual relation between Tasso and Alphonso, the public might have read between the

lines reflections on Karl August. Moreover, it is difficult to deny the truth of Madame de Staël's remark, that "les couleurs du Midi ne sont pas assez prononcées." The tone of the work is German throughout, and would considerably have surprised an Italian of the court of Ferrara.

"Tasso" was finally completed shortly after the rupture with the Frau von Stein, presently to be related; but I have noticed it here, as the most convenient place. It is in truth to be regarded as one of the products of his early Weimar years, having been merely versified in Italy, and after his return home.

CHAPTER VII.

RETURN HOME.

GOETHE came back from Italy greatly enriched, but by no means satisfied. The very wealth he had accumulated embarrassed him, by the new problems it presented, and the new horizons it revealed:

> "For all experience is an arch wherethrough
> Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever as we move."

He had in Rome become aware that a whole life of study would scarcely suffice to still the craving hunger for knowledge; and he left Italy with deep regret. The return home was thus, in itself, a grief; the arrival was still more painful. Every one will understand this, who after living for many months away from the circle of old habits and old acquaintances, feeling in the new world a larger existence more consonant with his nature and his aims, has returned once more to the old circle, to find it unchanged, — pursuing its old paths, moved by the old impulses, guided by the old lights, — so that he feels himself a stranger. To return to a great capital, after such an absence, is to feel ill at ease; but to return from Italy to Weimar! If we, on entering London, after a residence abroad, find the same interests occupying our friends which occupied them when we left, the same family gossip, the same books talked about, the same placards loud

upon the walls of the unchanging streets, the world seeming to have stood still while we have lived through so much: what must Goethe have felt coming from Italy, with his soul filled with new experience and new ideas, on observing the quiet, unchanged Weimar? No one seemed to understand him; no one sympathised with his enthusiasm, or his regrets. They found him changed. He found them moving in the same dull round, like blind horses in a mill.

First, let us note that he came back resolved to dedicate his life to Art and Science, and no more to waste efforts in the laborious duties of office. From Rome he had thus written to Karl August: "How grateful am I to you for having given me this priceless leisure. My mind having from youth upwards had this bent, I should never have been at ease until I had reached this end. My relation to affairs sprang out of my personal relation to you; now let a new relation, after so many years, spring from the former. I can truly say, that in the solitude of these eighteen months I have found my own self again. But as what? As an Artist! What else I may be, you will be able to judge and use. You have shown throughout your life that princely knowledge of what men are, and what they are useful for; and this knowledge has gone on increasing, as your letters clearly prove to me: to that knowledge I gladly submit myself. Ask my aid in that Symphony which you mean to play, and I will at all times gladly and honestly give you my advice. Let me fulfil the whole measure of my existence at your side, then will my powers, like a new-opened and purified spring, easily be directed hither and thither. Already I see what this journey has done for me, how it has clarified and brightened my existence. As you have hitherto borne with me, so care for me in future; you do me more good than I can do myself, more than I can claim. I have seen a large and beautiful bit of

the world, and the result is, that I wish only to live with you and yours. Yes, I shall become more to you than I have been before, if you let me do what I only can do, and leave the rest to others. Your sentiments for me, as expressed in your letters, are so beautiful, so honourable to me, that they make me blush, — that I can only say: Lord, here am I, do with thy servant as seemeth good unto thee."

The wise duke answered this appeal nobly. He released his friend from the Presidency of the Chamber, and from the direction of the War Department, but kept a distinct place for him in the Council, "whenever his other affairs allowed him to attend." The poet remained the adviser of his prince, but was relieved from the more onerous duties of office. The direction of the Mines, and of all Scientific and Artistic Institutions, he retained; among them that of the Theatre.

It was generally found that he had grown colder in his manners since his Italian journey. Indeed, the process of crystallisation had rapidly advanced; and beyond this effect of development, which would have taken place had he never left Weimar, there was the further addition of his feeling himself at a different standing-point from those around him. The less they understood him, the more he drew within himself. Those who understood him, Moritz, Meyer, the duke, and Herder, found no cause of complaint.

During the first few weeks he was of course constantly at court. Thus the *Hof-Courier-Buch* tells us that the day after his arrival he dined at court. This was the 19th June. Again on the 20th, 22d, 25th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th. In July, on the 1st, 2d, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 11th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st, and so on almost uninterruptedly till September. His official release made the bond of friendship stronger. Besides, every

one was naturally anxious to hear about his travels, and he was delighted to talk of them.

But if Weimar complained of the change, to which it soon grew accustomed, there was one who had deeper cause of complaint, and whose nature was not strong enough to bear it — the Frau von Stein. Absence had cooled the ardour of his love. In Rome, to the negative influence of absence, was added the positive influence of a new affection. He had returned to Weimar, still grateful to her for the happiness she had given him, still feeling for her the affection which no conduct of hers could destroy, and which warmed his heart toward her to the last; but he returned also with little of the passion she had for ten years inspired; he returned with a full conviction that he had outlived it. Nor did her presence serve to rekindle the smouldering embers. Charlotte von Stein was now five and forty. It is easy to imagine how much he must have been struck with the change in her. Had he never left her side, this change would have approached with gradual steps, stealthily escaping observation; but the many months' absence removed a veil from his eyes. She was five and forty to him, as to others. In this perilous position she adopted the very worst course. She found him changed, and told him so, in a way which made him feel more sharply the change in her. She thought him cold, and her resource was — reproaches. The resource was more feminine than felicitous. Instead of sympathising with him in his sorrow at leaving Italy, she felt the regret as an offence; and perhaps it was; but a truer, nobler nature would surely have known how to merge its own pain in sympathy with the pain of one beloved. He regretted Italy; she was not a compensation to him; she saw this and her self-love suffered. The coquette who had so long held him captive, now saw the captive freed from her chains. It was a trying moment. But even in the worst aspect

of the position, there was that which a worthy nature would have regarded as no small consolation: she might still be his dearest friend, and the friendship of such a man was worth more than the love of another. But this was not to be.

Before the final rupture, he went with her to Rudolstadt, and there for the first time spoke with Schiller, who thus writes to Körner, 12th September, 1788: "At last I can tell you about Goethe, and satisfy your curiosity. The first sight of him was by no means what I had been led to expect. He is of middle stature, holds himself stiffly and walks stiffly; his countenance is not open, but his eye very full of expression, lively, and one hangs with delight on his glances. With much seriousness his mien has nevertheless much goodness and benevolence. He is brown complexioned, and seemed to me older in appearance than his years. His voice is very agreeable, his narrations are flowing, animated, and full of spirit; one listens with pleasure; and when he is in good humour, as was the case this time, he talks willingly and with great interest. We soon made acquaintance, and without the slightest effort; the circle, indeed, was too large, and every one too jealous of him, for me to speak much with him alone, or on any but general topics. . . . On the whole, I must say that my great idea of him is not lessened by this personal acquaintance; but I doubt whether we shall ever become intimate. Much that to me is now of great interest, he has already lived through; he is, less in years than in experience and self-culture, so far beyond me that we can never meet on the way; and his whole being is originally different from mine, his world is not my world, our conceptions are radically different. Time will show."

Could he have looked into Goethe's soul he would have seen there was a wider gulf between them than he imagined. In scarcely any other instance was so

great a friendship ever formed between men who at first seem more opposed to each other. At this moment Goethe was peculiarly ill-disposed toward any friendship with Schiller, for he saw in him the powerful writer who had corrupted and misled the nation. He has told us how pained he was on his return from Italy to find Germany jubilant over Heinse's "Ardinghello," and Schiller's "Robbers" and "Fiesco." He had pushed far from him, and for ever, the whole *Sturm und Drang* creed; he had outgrown that tendency, and learned to hate his own works which sprang from it; in Italy he had taken a new direction, hoping to make the nation follow him in this higher region, as it had followed him before. But while he advanced, the nation stood still; he "passed it like a ship at sea." Instead of following him, the public followed his most extravagant imitators. He hoped to enchant men with the calm, ideal beauty of an Iphigenie, and the sunny heroism of an Egmont; and found every one enraptured with Ardinghello and Karl Moor. His publisher had to complain that the new edition of his works, on which so much time and pains had been bestowed, went off very slowly, while the highly spiced works of his rivals were bought by thousands.

"Schüler macht sich der Schwärmer genug, und rühret die Menge,
Wenn der vernünftige Mann einzelne Liebende zählt.
Wunderthätige Bilder sind meist nur schlechte Gemälde,
Werke des Geists und der Kunst sind für den Pöbel nicht da."[1]

In this frame of mind it is natural that he should keep aloof from Schiller, and withstand the various efforts

[1] "Dreamers make scholars enough, they flatter the weakness of thousands,
While the intelligent man counts his disciples by tens.
Poor indeed are the pictures famous for miracle-working:
Art in its loftiest forms ne'er can be prized by the mob."

made to bring about an intimacy. "To be much with Goethe," Schiller writes in the February following, "would make me unhappy; with his nearest friends he has no moments of overflowingness: I believe, indeed, he is an egoist, in an unusual degree. He has the talent of conquering men, and of binding them by small as well as great attentions: but he always knows how to hold himself free. He makes his existence benevolently felt, but only like a god, without giving himself: this seems to me a consequent and well-planned conduct, which is calculated to ensure the highest enjoyment of self-love. . . . Thereby is he hateful to me, although I love his genius from my heart, and think greatly of him. . . . It is quite a peculiar mixture of love and hatred he has awakened in me, a feeling akin to that which Brutus and Cassius must have had for Cæsar. I could kill his spirit, and then love him again from my heart." These sentences read very strangely now we know how Schiller came to love and reverence the man whom he here so profoundly misunderstands, and whom he judges thus from the surface. But they are interesting sentences in many respects; in none more so than in showing that if he, on nearer acquaintance, came to love the noble nature of his great rival, it is a proof that he had seen how superficial had been his first judgment. Let the reader who has been led to think harshly of Goethe, from one cause or another, take this into consideration, and ask himself whether he too, on better knowledge, might not alter his opinion.

"With Goethe," so runs another letter, "I will not compare myself, when he puts forth his whole strength. He has far more genius than I have, and greater wealth of knowledge, a more accurate sensuous perception (*eine sichere Sinnlichkeit*), and to all these he adds an artistic taste, cultivated and sharpened by knowledge of all works of Art." But with this acknowledgment

of superiority there was coupled an unpleasant feeling of *envy* at Goethe's happier lot, a feeling which his own unhappy position renders very explicable. "I will let you see into my heart," he writes to Körner. "*Once for all, this man, this Goethe, stands in my way*, and recalls to me so often that fate has dealt hardly with me. How lightly is *his* genius borne by his fate; and how must *I* even at this moment struggle!"

Fate had indeed treated them very differently. Throughout Schiller's correspondence we are pained by the sight of sordid cares, and anxious struggles for existence. He is in bad health, in difficult circumstances. We see him forced to make literature a trade; and it is a bad one. We see him anxious to do hack-work, and translations, for a few dollars, quite cheered by the prospect of getting such work; nay, glad to farm it out to other writers, who will do it for less than he receives. We see him animated with high aspirations, and depressed by cares. He too is struggling through the rebellious epoch of youth, but has not yet attained the clearness of manhood; and no external aids come to help him through the struggle. Goethe, on the contrary, never knew such cares. All his life he had been shielded from the depressing influence of poverty; and now he has leisure, affluence, renown, social position — little from *without* to make him unhappy. When Schiller therefore thought of all this, he must have felt that fate had been a niggard stepmother to him, as she had been a lavish mother to his rival.

Yet Goethe had his sorrows, too, though not of the same kind. He bore within him the flame of genius, a flame which consumes while it irradiates. His struggles were with himself, and not with circumstances. He felt himself a stranger in the land. Few understood his language; none understood his aims. He withdrew into himself.

There is one point which must be noticed in this position of the two poets, namely, that however great Schiller may be now esteemed, and was esteemed by Goethe after awhile, he was not at this moment regarded with anything beyond the feeling usually felt for a rising young author. His early works had indeed a wide popularity; but so had the works of Klinger, Maler Müller, Lenz, Kotzebue, and others, who never conquered the great critics; and Schiller was so unrecognised at this time that, on coming to Weimar, he complains, with surprise as much as with offended self-love, that Herder seemed to know nothing of him beyond his name, not having apparently read one of his works. And Goethe, in the official paper which he drew up recommending Schiller to the Jena professorship, speaks of him as "a Herr Friedrich Schiller, author of an historical work on the Netherlands." So that not only was Schiller's tendency antipathetic to all Goethe then prized, he was not even in that position which commands the respect of antagonists; and Goethe considered Art too profoundly important in the development of mankind for differences of tendency to be overlooked as unimportant.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIANE VULPIUS.

ONE day early in July, 1788, Goethe, walking in the much-loved park, was accosted by a fresh, young, bright-looking girl, who, with many reverences, handed him a petition. He looked into the bright eyes of the petitioner, and then, in a conciliated mood, looked at the petition, which entreated the great poet to exert his influence to procure a post for a young author, then living at Jena by the translation of French and Italian stories. This young author was Vulpius, whose "Rinaldo Rinaldini" has doubtless made some of my readers shudder in their youth. His robber romances were at one time very popular; but his name is now only rescued from oblivion, because he was the brother of that Christiane who handed the petition to Goethe, and who thus took the first step on the path which led to their marriage. Christiane is on many accounts an interesting figure to those who are interested in the biography of Goethe; and the love she excited, no less than the devotedness with which for eight and twenty years she served him, deserve a more tender memory than has befallen her.

Her father was one of those wretched beings whose drunkenness slowly but surely brings a whole family to want. He would sell the coat off his back for drink. When his children grew up, they contrived to get away from him, and to support themselves: the son by litera-

ture, the daughters by making artificial flowers,[1] woollen work, etc. It is usually said that Christiane was utterly uneducated, and the epigrammatic pen glibly records that "Goethe married his servant." She never was his servant. Nor was she uneducated. Her social position indeed was very humble, as the foregoing indications suggest: but that she was not uneducated is plainly seen in the facts, of which there can be no doubt, namely, that for her were written the "Roman Elegies," and the "Metamorphoses of Plants;" and that in her company Goethe pursued his optical and botanical researches. How much she understood of those researches we cannot know: but it is certain that, unless she had shown a lively comprehension, he would never have persisted in talking of them to her. Their time, he says, was not spent only in caresses, but also in rational talk:

> "Wird doch nicht immer geküsst, es wird vernünftig gesprochen.

This is decisive. Throughout his varied correspondence we always see him presenting different subjects to different minds, treating of topics in which his correspondents are interested, not dragging forward topics which merely interest *him;* and among the wide range of subjects he had mastered, there were many upon which he might have conversed with Christiane, in preference to science, had she shown any want of comprehension of scientific facts and ideas. There is one of the "Elegies," the eighth, which in six lines gives a distinct idea of the sort of cleverness and the sort of beauty which she possessed; a cleverness not of the kind recognised by school-masters, because it does not display itself in aptitude for book-learning; a beauty

[1] This detail will give the reader a clue to the poem "Der neue Pausias."

not of the kind recognised by conventional taste, because it wants the conventional regularity of feature.

"Wenn du mir sagst, du habest als Kind, Geliebte, den Menschen
Nicht gefallen, und dich habe die Mutter verschmäht,
Bis du grösser geworden und still dich entwickelt; ich glaub' es:
Gerne denk' ich mir dich als ein besonderes Kind.
Fehlet Bildung und Farbe doch auch der Blüthe des Weinstocks,
Wenn die Beere gereift, Menschen und Götter entzückt."[1]

Surely the poet's word is to be taken in such a case?

While, however, rectifying a general error, let me not fall into the opposite extreme. Christiane had her charm; but she was not a highly gifted woman. She was not a Frau von Stein, capable of being the companion and the sharer of his highest aspirations. Quick mother-wit, a lively spirit, a loving heart, and great aptitude for domestic duties, she undoubtedly possessed: she was gay, enjoying, fond of pleasure even to excess, and — as may be read in the poems which she inspired — was less the mistress of his Mind than of his Affections. Her golden-brown locks, laughing eyes, ruddy cheeks, kiss-provoking lips, small and gracefully rounded figure, gave her "the appearance of a young Dionysos."[2] Her *naïveté*, gaiety, and enjoying temperament completely fascinated Goethe, who recognised in her one of those free, healthy specimens of Nature which education had not distorted by artifices. She was like a child of the sensuous Italy he had just quitted with so much regret; and there are few poems

[1] "When you tell me, dearest, that as a child you were not admired, and even your mother scorned you, till you grew up and silently developed yourself; I can quite believe it. I can readily imagine you as a peculiar child. If the blossoms of the vine are wanting in colour and form, the grapes once ripe are the delight of gods and men."

[2] So says Madame Schopenhauer, *not* a prejudiced witness.

in any language which approach the passionate gratitude of those in which he recalls the happiness she gave him.

Why did he not marry her at once? His dread of marriage has already been shown; and to this abstract dread there must be added the great disparity of station: a disparity so great that not only did it make the *liaison* scandalous, it made Christiane herself reject the offer of marriage. Stahr reports that persons now living have heard her declare that it was her own fault her marriage was so long delayed; and certain it is that when — Christmas, 1789 — she bore him a child (August von Goethe, to whom the duke stood godfather) he took her with her mother and sister to live in his house, and always regarded the connection as a marriage. But however he may have regarded it, Public Opinion has not forgiven this defiance of social laws. The world blamed him loudly; even his admirers cannot think of the connection without pain. "The Nation," says Schäfer, "has never forgiven its greatest poet for this rupture with Law and Custom; nothing has stood so much in the way of a right appreciation of his moral character, nothing has created more false judgments on the tendency of his writings than his half-marriage."

But let us be just. While no one can refrain from deploring that Goethe, so eminently needing a pure domestic life, should not have found a wife whom he could avow, one who would in all senses have been a wife to him, the mistress of his house, the companion of his life; on the other hand, no one who knows the whole circumstances can refrain from confessing that there was also a bright side to this dark episode. Having indicated the dark side, and especially its social effect, we have to consider what happiness it brought him at a time when he was most lonely, most unhappy. It gave him the joys of paternity, for which his heart

yearned. It gave him a faithful and devoted affection. It gave him one to look after his domestic existence; and it gave him a peace in that existence which hitherto he had sought in vain.

"Oftmals hab' ich geirrt, und habe mich wieder gefunden,
Aber glücklicher nie; nun ist diess Mädchen mein Glück!
Ist auch dieses ein Irrthum, so schont mich, ihr klügeren Götter,
Und benehmt mir ihn erst drüben am kalten Gestad."[1]

There is a letter still extant (unpublished) written ten years after their first acquaintance, in which, like a passionate lover, he regrets not having taken something of hers on his journey — even her slipper — that he might feel less lonely! To have excited such love, Christiane must have been a very different woman from that which it is the fashion in Germany to describe her as being. In conclusion, let it be added that his mother expressed herself perfectly satisfied with his choice, received Christiane as a daughter, and wrote affectionately to her, calling her dear daughter years before the marriage, and from the first refused to listen to the officious meddlers who tried to convince her of the scandal which the connection occasioned.

The "Roman Elegies" are doubly interesting: first, as expressions of his feelings; secondly, as perhaps the most perfect poems of the kind in all literature. In them we see how the journey to Italy had saturated his mind with the spirit of ancient Art. Yet while reproducing the past with matchless felicity, he is, at the same time, thoroughly *original*. Nowhere in Greek or Roman literature do I remember this union of great thoughts, giving grandeur to the verse, with individual passion, giving it intensity. They are not

[1] "Often have I erred, and always found the path again, but never found myself happier: now in this maiden lies my happiness! If this, too, is an error, O spare me the knowledge, ye gods, and let me only discover it beyond the grave."

simply elegies — outpourings of individual feelings — they are *Roman* elegies, and mirror a world. In modern poems classical recollections and allusions are for the most part frigid and laboured, not the spontaneous forms of poetic expression. In these "Roman Elegies" the classic world lives again; indeed at times one can almost say he is more antique than the ancients.[1] The thirteenth elegy, "Amor der Schalk," for example, is in Anacreon's manner, but far above anything we have of Anacreon. Antique also is the direct unmisgiving sensuousness of the poet, and his unperplexed earnestness of passion, an earnestness which does not absorb the other activities of his nature, but allies itself with them. Thus in the fifth elegy there is a picture of the most vivid sensuousness, aiding, not thwarting, the poetical activity. What a poem, what a world of emotion and thought these lines suggest:

"Ueberfällt sie der Schlaf, lieg' ich und denke mir viel.
Oftmals hab' ich auch schon in ihren Armen gedichtet,
Und des Hexameters Mass leise mit fingernder Hand
Ihr auf dem Rücken gezählt. Sie athmet in lieblichem Schlummer,
Und es durchglühet ihr Hauch mir bis ins Tiefste die Brust."

This picture of the poet murmuring verses while his beloved sleeps softly by his side; warmed by her breath, yet with fingering hand marking the rhythm of verse; is typical of the whole story of Goethe's love. Passion fed, it never stifled the flame of his genius. He enjoyed; but in the brief pauses of enjoyment the presence of high aims was felt.

The blending of individual passion with classic forms, making the past live again in the feeling of the present, may be illustrated by the following example:

[1] Schlegel happily says of them, "They enrich Roman poetry with German poems." ("Characteristiken und Kritiken," ii. p. 199.)

"Lass dich, Geliebte, nicht reu'n, dass du mir so schnell dich ergeben!
Glaub' es, ich denke nicht frech, denke nicht niedrig von dir.
Vielfach wirken die Pfeile des Amor: einige ritzen
Und vom schleichenden Gift kranket auf Jahre das Herz.
Aber mächtig befiedert, mit frisch geschliffener Schärfe,
Dringen die andern ins Mark, zünden behende das Blut.
In der heroischen Zeit, da Götter und Göttinnen liebten,
Folgte Begierde dem Blick, folgte Genuss der Begier.
Glaubst du, es habe sich lange die Göttin der Liebe besonnen,
Als in Idäischen Hain einst ihr Anchises gefiel?
Hätte Luna gesäumt, den schönen Schläfer zu küssen,
O, so hätt' ihn geschwind, neidend, Aurora geweckt."[1]

Many of the finest passages are as antique in their directness of expression as in other qualities. He said justly to Eckermann, that metre is a peculiar veil which clothes the nakedness of expression, and makes that admissible which in prose would be offensive, and which even in another lighter kind of metre would be offensive. In the "Don Juan" stanza, he says, the material of the "Roman Elegies" would be indelicate. On the question how far a poet is justified in disregarding the conventional proprieties of his age in the portrayal of feeling, let Schiller be heard: "The laws

[1] In Sir Theodore Martin's volume of privately printed poems and translations the passage in the text is thus rendered:

"Blush not, my love, at the thought, thou yieldedst so soon to my passion;
Trust me, I think it no shame — think it no vileness in thee!
Shafts from the quiver of Amor have manifold consequence. Some scratch,
And the heart sickens for years with the insidious bane:
Others drawn home to the head, full plumed, and cruelly pointed,
Pierce to the marrow, and straight kindle the blood into flame.
In the heroical age, when goddess and god were the lovers,
Scarce did they look but they long'd, longing they rushed to enjoy.
Think'st thou Love's goddess hung back, when deep in the forest of Ida,
She, with a thrill of delight, first her Anchises beheld?
Coyly had Luna delayed to fondle the beautiful sleeper,
Soon had Aurora in spite waken'd the boy from his dream."

of propriety are foreign to innocent nature; only the experience of corruption has given origin to them. But as soon as that corruption has taken place, and natural innocence has vanished from manners, the laws of propriety are sacred, and moral feeling will not offend them. They have the same validity in an artificial world as the laws of nature have in a world of innocence. But the very thing which constitutes the poet, is that he banishes from himself everything which reminds him of an artificial world, that he may restore nature in her primitive simplicity. And if he has done this, he is thereby absolved from all laws by which a perverted heart seeks security against itself. He is pure, he is innocent, and whatever is permitted to innocent nature is permitted also to him. If thou who readest and hearest him art no longer innocent, and if thou canst not even momentarily become so by his purifying presence, it is thy *misfortune* and not his; thou forsakest him, he did not sing for thee."

Had Goethe written nothing but the "Roman Elegies," he would hold a first place among German poets. These elegies are, moreover, scarcely less interesting in their biographical significance. They speak plainly of the effect of Italy upon his mind. They speak eloquently of his love for Christiane. There are other tributes to her charms, and to the happiness she gave him; but were there no other tributes, these would suffice to show the injustice of the opinion which the malicious tongues of Weimar have thrown into currency respecting her; opinions, indeed, which received some countenance from her subsequent life, when she had lost youth and beauty, and when the faults of her nature had acquired painful prominence. It is Goethe's misfortune with posterity that he is mostly present to our minds as the calm old man, seldom as the glorious youth. The majority of busts, portraits, and biographic details are of the late period of his career. In like

manner, it is the misfortune of his wife that testimonies about her come mostly from those who only saw her when the grace and charm of youth had given place to a coarse and corpulent age. But the biographer's task is to ascertain by diligent inquiry what is the truth at the various epochs of a career, not limiting himself to one epoch; and as I have taken great pains to represent the young Goethe, so also have I tried to rescue the young Christiane from the falsifications of gossip, and the misrepresentations derived from judging her youth by her old age.

It has already been intimated that Weimar was loud in disapprobation of this new liaison; although it had uttered no word against the liaison with the Frau von Stein. The great offence seems to have been his choosing one beneath him in rank. A chorus of indignation arose. It produced the final rupture between him and the Frau von Stein. Here is a letter wherein he answers her reproaches: "If you could but listen to me, I would gladly tell you, that although your reproaches pain me at the moment, they leave no trace of anger in my heart against you. Moreover, I can set them right. If you have much to bear from me, it is but just that I should also bear with you. It is much better that we should come to a friendly understanding, than strive constantly to come to unanimity, and when that striving fails, separate again. It is impossible to clear myself with you, because, on every reckoning, I must remain your debtor. But if we consider how much we have all to bear from each other, we shall still, dearest, forgive one another. Farewell, and love — me. On the first opportunity you shall hear more about the pretty secrets."

The pretty secrets here alluded to are probably about Christiane. The letter produced a reply, which called from him the following: "Thanks for thy letter, although it has troubled me in more ways than one.

I delayed answering it, because it is difficult in such cases to be sincere, and not give pain. . . . What I left behind in Italy I will not now repeat; you have already repulsed my confidence on that subject in a manner sufficiently unfriendly. When I first returned, you were, unhappily, in a peculiar mood, and I honestly confess the way in which you received me was excessively painful. I saw Herder and the duchess depart for Italy; they urgently offered me a place in their carriage, but I stayed behind for the sake of that friend for whom I had returned; and this, too, was at a moment when I was incessantly and sarcastically told that I might as well have remained in Italy, — that I had no sympathy, and so on. And all this before there was a hint of the liaison which now seems to offend you so much. And what is this liaison? Who is beggared by it? Who makes any claims on the feelings I give the poor creature? Who, on the hours I pass in her society? Ask Fritz, ask the Herders, ask any one who knows me intimately, whether I am less sympathetic, less active, or less friendly than before. Whether I do not rather now, for the first time, rightly belong to them and to society. And it must be by a miracle indeed if I should have forgotten the best, the deepest relation of all, that, namely, to thee. How vividly I have felt my disposition to be the same, whenever it has happened that we have talked on some interesting subject! But I freely confess that the manner in which you have treated me hitherto is not to be endured. When I was inclined to talk, you shut my lips; when I was communicative about Italy, you complained of my indifference; when I was active for my friends, you reproached me with coldness and neglect of you. You criticised every look, blamed every movement, and constantly made me feel ill at ease. How then can openness and confidence continue, while you repulse me with predetermined ill

humour? I would add more, did I not fear that in your present mood it might irritate you more than it would tend to reconcile us. Unhappily, you have long despised my advice with reference to coffee, and have adopted a regimen eminently injurious to your health. As if it were not already difficult enough to conquer certain moral impressions, you strengthen your hypochondria by physical aids, the evil influence of which you have long acknowledged, and out of love to me had for some time relinquished, to the obvious improvement of your health. May the present journey do you good! I do not quite relinquish the hope that you will again learn to know me. Farewell. Fritz is happy and visits me constantly."

Over this letter she wrote *O ! ! !* It was a terrible letter to receive, and she doubtless was indignant at what she conceived to be its injustice. She had been "misunderstood." People always *are* misunderstood in such cases. They are blameless, but their conduct is misrepresented. They are conscious of having felt precisely the reverse of what is attributed to them; and they wonder that they are not known better.

Shifting our position, and reading the letter less from the Frau von Stein's point of view, than from the point of view of bystanders, we read in it the amplest justification of the writer. We see how intensely unamiable must have been her manner of receiving him. Her subsequent conduct but too well confirms this impression. She showed herself worse than unamiable. The final passage of the letter, alluding to her hypochondria being aggravated by coffee and bad diet, reads like an impertinence; but those who know how serious he was in his objections to the use of coffee, and how clearly he perceived the influence of physical well-being on moral health, will not be surprised at it. Moreover, very early in their friendship (in 1777 and

again in 1783), we find him writing most earnestly to her on the subject, begging her to give up coffee, because it was so injurious to her health. At any rate, whatever accents of harshness may be heard in this letter, there is no mistaking the pain in it; and a week after he writes the following:

"It is not easy for me to write a letter with more pain than the one I last wrote to thee, which was probably as unpleasant for thee to read as for me to write. Meanwhile at least the lips have been opened, and I hope that never may we henceforth keep them closed against each other. I have had no greater happiness than my confidence in thee, which formerly was unlimited, and since I have been unable to use it, I have become another man, and must in future still more become so. I do not complain of my present condition. I have managed to make myself at home in it, and hope to keep so, although the climate once more affects me, and will sooner or later make me unfit for much that is good. But when I think of the damp summer and severe winter, and of the combination of outward circumstances which makes existence here difficult, I know not which way to turn.[1] I say this as much in relation to *thee* as to myself, and assure thee that it pains me infinitely to give thee pain under such circumstances. I will say nothing in my own excuse. But I would beg thee to help me so that the relation which thou objectest to may not become still more objectionable, but remain as it is. Give me once more thy confidence; see the case from a natural point of view, let me speak to thee quietly and reasonably about it, and I dare to hope that everything between us will once more be pure and friendly. Thou hast seen my mother and made her happy; let my return make me happy also."

[1] This is a paraphrastic abbreviation of the passage, which if given as in the original would need long collateral explanations.

He offered friendship in vain; he had wounded the self-love of a vain woman. There is a relentless venom in many minds which, when the self-love is wounded, poisons friendship and destroys all gratitude. It was not enough for the Frau von Stein that he had loved her so many years with a rare devotion; it was not enough that he had been more to her child than its own father was; it was not enough that now the inevitable change had come, he still felt tenderness and affection for her, grateful for what she *had* been to him; the one fact, that he had ceased to love her, expunged the whole past. A nature with any nobleness never forgets that once it loved, and once was happy in that love: the generous heart is grateful in its memories. The heart of the Frau von Stein had no memory but for its wounds. She spoke with petty malice of the "low person" who had usurped her place; rejected Goethe's friendship; affected to pity him; and circulated gossip about his beloved. They were forced to meet; but they met no longer as before. To the last he thought and spoke of her tenderly; and I know on unexceptionable authority that when there was anything appetising brought to table, which he thought would please her, he often said, "Send some of this to the Frau von Stein."

There is a letter of hers extant which shows what was the state of her feelings after a lapse of twelve years. It may find a place here as a conclusive document with which to wind up the strange episode of their history. It is addressed to her son. Three passages are italicised by way of emphasis, to call attention to the spirit animating the writer.

"WEIMAR, January 12th, 1801.

"I did not know that our *former friend Goethe* was still so dear to me, that a severe illness, from which he has been suffering for nine days, would so deeply

affect me. It is a convulsive cough accompanied with erysipelas; he can lie in no bed, and is obliged always to be kept in a standing posture, otherwise he would be choked. His neck, as well as his face, is swollen and full of internal blisters, his left eye stands out like a great nut, and discharges blood and matter; he is often delirious; inflammation of the brain was feared, so he was bled and had mustard foot-baths, which made his feet swell, and seemed to do him some good: but last night the convulsive cough returned, I fear from his having been shaved yesterday; my letter will tell you either of his being better or of his death — I shall not send it before. The Schillers and I have already shed many tears over him in the last few days; I deeply regret now that *when he wished to visit me on New Year's Day, I, alas! because I lay ill with headache, excused myself*, and now I shall perhaps never see him again.

"*14th.* Goethe is better, but the twenty-first day must be got over; between this and then something else might happen to him, because the inflammation has injured something in his head and his diaphragm. Yesterday he ate with great appetite some soup which I had sent him; his eye, too, is better, but he is very melancholy, and they say he wept for three hours; especially he weeps when he sees August, who has in the meantime taken refuge with me; I am sorry for the poor boy; he was dreadfully distressed, but he is already accustomed to drink away his troubles; he lately in *a club belonging to his mother's class*, drank seventeen glasses of champagne, and I had the greatest difficulty in keeping him from wine when he was with me.

"*15th.* Goethe sent to me to-day, thanked me for my sympathy, and hoped he should soon be better; the doctors consider him out of danger, but his recovery will take a long time yet."

Who could believe that this was written by one passionately loved for ten years, and written of one who was thought to be dying? Even here her hatred to Christiane cannot restrain itself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POET AS A MAN OF SCIENCE.

To the immense variety of his studies in Art and Science must now be added a fragmentary acquaintance with the philosophy of Kant. He had neither the patience nor the delight in metaphysical abstractions requisite to enable him to master the Critique of Pure Reason: but he read here and there in it, as he read in Spinoza; and was especially interested in the æsthetical portions of the "Kritik der Urtheilskraft." This was a means of bringing him nearer to Schiller, who still felt the difference between them to be profound; as we see in what he wrote to Körner: "His philosophy draws too much of its material from the world of the senses, where I only draw from the soul. His mode of presentation is altogether too sensuous for me. But his spirit works and seeks in every direction, striving to create a whole, and that makes him in my eyes a great man."

Remarkable indeed is the variety of his strivings. After completing "Tasso," we find him writing on the Roman Carnival, and on Imitation of Nature, and studying with strange ardour the mysteries of botany and optics. In poetry it is only necessary to name the "Roman Elegies," to show what productivity in that direction he was capable of; although, in truth, his poetical activity was then in subordination to his activity in science. He was, socially, in an unpleasant condition: and, as he subsequently confessed, would never have been able to hold out, had it not been for

his studies in Art and Nature. In all times these were his refuge and consolation.

On Art, the world listened to him attentively. On Science, the world would not listen; but turned away in silence, sometimes in derision. In both he was only an amateur. He had no executive ability in Painting or Sculpture to give authority to his opinions, yet his word was listened to with respect, often with enthusiasm.[1] But while artists and the public admitted that a man of genius might speak with some authority, although an amateur, men of science were not willing that a man of genius should speak on *their* topics, until he had passed college examinations and received his diploma. The veriest blockhead who had received a diploma considered himself entitled to sneer at the poet who "dabbled in comparative anatomy." Nevertheless, that poet made discoveries and enunciated laws, the importance of which many a professional sneerer could not even appreciate, so far did they transcend his knowledge.

Professional men have a right to be suspicious of the amateur, for they know how arduous a training is required by Science. But while it is just that they should be *suspicious*, it is absurd for them to shut their eyes. When the amateur brings forward crudities, which he announces to be discoveries, their scorn may be legitimate enough; but when he happens to bring forward a discovery, and they treat it as crudity, their scorn becomes self-stultification. If their professional training gives them superiority, that superiority should give them greater readiness of apprehension. The truth is, however, that ordinary professional training gives them nothing of the sort. The mass of men receive with difficulty every new idea, unless it lies

[1] Rauch, the sculptor, told me that among the influences of his life, he reckons the enthusiasm which Goethe's remarks on Art excited in him. Many others would doubtless say the same.

in the track of their own knowledge; and this opposition, which every new idea must vanquish, becomes tenfold greater when the idea is promulgated from a source not in itself authoritative.

But whence comes this authority? From the respect paid to genius and labour. The man of genius who is known to have devoted much time to the consideration of any subject is justly supposed to be more competent to speak on that subject than one who has paid little attention to it. No amount of genius, no amount of study, can secure a man from his native fallibility; but, after adequate study, there is a presumption in his favour; and it is this presumption which constitutes authority. In the case of a poet who claims to be heard on a question of science, we naturally assume that he has not given the requisite labour; and on such topics genius without labour carries no authority. But if his researches show that the labour *has* been given, we must then cease to regard him as a poet, and admit him to the citizenship of science. No one disputes the scientific glory of a Haller, or a Redi, on the ground of their being poets. They were poets and scientific workers; and so was Goethe. This would perhaps have been more readily acknowledged if he had walked in the well-beaten tracks of scientific thought; but he opened new tracks, and those who might, perhaps, have accepted him as a colleague, were called upon to accept him as a guide. Human nature could not stand this. The presumption against a poet was added to the presumption against novelty; singly each of these would have been an obstacle to a ready acceptance; united they were insuperable.

When Goethe wrote his exquisite little treatise on the "Metamorphoses of Plants,"[1] he had to contend

[1] He has also a poem on this subject, but it is scarcely more poetical.

against the twofold obstacle of resistance to novelty, and his own reputation. Had an obscure professor published this work, its novelty would have sufficed to render it unacceptable; but the obscurest name in Germany would have had a *prestige* greater than the name of the great poet. All novelty is *prima facie* suspicious; none but the young welcome it; for is not every new discovery a kind of slur on the sagacity of those who overlooked it? And can novelty in science, promulgated by a poet, be worth the trouble of refutation? The professional authorities decided that it could not. The publisher of Goethe's works, having consulted a botanist, declined to undertake the printing of the "Metamorphoses of Plants." The work was only printed at last because an enterprising bookseller hoped thereby to gain the publication of the other works. When it appeared, the public saw in it a pretty piece of fancy, nothing more. Botanists shrugged their shoulders, and regretted the author had not reserved his imagination for his poems. No one believed in the theory, not even his attached friends. He had to wait many years before seeing it generally accepted, and it was then only accepted because great botanists had made it acceptable. A considerable authority on this matter has told us how long the theory was neglected, and how "depuis dix ans" (written in 1838) "il n'a peut-être pas été publié un seul livre d'organographie, ou de botanique descriptive, qui ne porte l'empreinte des idées de cet écrivain illustre."[1] It was the fact of the theory being announced by the author of "Werther" which mainly retarded its acceptance; but the fact also that the theory was leagues in advance of the state of science in that day must not be overlooked. For it is curious

[1] Auguste St.-Hilaire: "Comptes rendus des Séances de l'Acad., vii. 437. See also his work "Morphologie Végétale," vol. i. p. 15.

that the leading idea had been briefly yet explicitly announced as early as 1759, by Caspar Friedrich Wolff, in his now deservedly celebrated "Theoria Generationis," and again in 1764, in his "Theorie von der Generation."[1] I shall have to recur to Wolff; at present it need only be noted that even *his* professional authority and remarkable power could not secure the slightest attention from botanists for the morphological theory — a proof that the age was not ripe for its acceptance.

A few of the eminent botanists began, after the lapse of some years, to recognise the discovery. Thus Kieser declared it to be "certainly the vastest conception which vegetable physiology had for a long time known." Voigt expressed his irritation at the blindness of the botanists in refusing to accept it. Nees von Esenbeck, one of the greatest names in the science, wrote in 1818, "Theophrastus is the creator of modern botany. Goethe is its tender father, to whom it will raise looks full of love and gratitude, as soon as it grows out of its infancy, and acquires the sentiment which it owes to him who has raised it to so high a position." And Sprengel in his History of Botany frequently mentions the theory. In one place he says, "The 'Metamorphoses' had a meaning so profound, joined to such great simplicity, and was so fertile in consequences, that we must not be surprised if it stood in need of multiplied commentaries, and if many botanists failed to see its importance."

It is now, and has been for some years, the custom to insert a chapter on Metamorphosis in every work which pretends to a high scientific character.

"For a half-century," says Goethe in the History of the Botanical Studies, "I have been known as a poet

[1] I have only been able to procure this latter work, which is a more popular and excursive exposition of the principles maintained in the Inaugural Dissertation of 1759.

in my own country and abroad. No one thinks of refusing me that talent. But it is not generally known, it has not been taken into consideration, that I have also occupied myself seriously through many years with the physical and physiological phenomena of Nature, observing them with the perseverance which passion alone can give. Thus when my essay on the development of plants, published nearly forty years before, fixed the attention of botanists in Switzerland and France, there seemed no expression for the astonishment at the fact of a poet thus going out of his route to make a discovery so important. It is to combat this false notion that I have written the history of my studies, to show that a great part of my life had been devoted to Natural History, for which I had a passion. It is by no sudden and unexpected inspiration of genius, but through long-prosecuted studies, I arrived at my results. I might doubtless have accepted the honour which men wished to pay my sagacity, and in secret rejoiced in it. But as it is equally pernicious in science to keep exclusively to facts, or exclusively to abstract theories, I have deemed it my duty to write, for serious men, the detailed history of my studies."

He was not *much* hurt at the reception of his work. He knew how unwilling men are to accord praise to any one who aims at success in different spheres, and found it perfectly natural they should be so unwilling; adding, however, that "an energetic nature feels itself brought into the world for *its own development, and not for the approbation of the public.*"

We shall have occasion to consider his theory of Metamorphosis hereafter; at present let us follow the biographical path, and note his confession that some of the happiest moments of his life were those devoted to his botanical studies. "They have acquired an inestimable value in my eyes," he says, "because to

them I owe the most beautiful of all the relations which my lucky star shone on. To them I owe the friendship of Schiller."

Side by side with botanical and anatomical studies must be placed his optical studies. A more illustrative contrast can scarcely be found than is afforded by the history of his efforts in these two directions. They throw light upon scientific Method, and they throw light on his scientific qualities and defects. If we have hitherto followed him with sympathy and admiration, we must now be prepared to follow him with that feeling of pain which rises at the sight of a great intellect struggling in a false direction. His botanical and anatomical studies were of that high character which makes one angry at their cold reception; his optical studies were of a kind to puzzle and to irritate.

He has written the history of these studies also. From youth upwards he had been prone to theorise on painting, led thereto, as he profoundly remarks, by the very absence of a talent for painting. It was not necessary for him to theorise on poetry; he had within him the creative power. It *was* necessary for him to theorise on painting, because he wanted "by reason and insight to fill up the deficiencies of nature." In Italy these theories found abundant stimulus. With his painter friends he discussed colour and colouring, trying by various paradoxes to strike out a truth. The friends were all deplorably vague in their notions of colour. The critical treatises were equally vague. Nowhere could he find firm ground. He began to think of the matter from the opposite side — instead of trying to solve the artist's problem, he strove to solve the scientific problem. He asked himself, What is colour? Men of science referred him to Newton; but Newton gave him little help. Professor Büttner lent him some prisms and optical instruments, to try the prescribed experiments. He kept the prisms a

long while, but made no use of them. Büttner wrote to him for his instruments; Goethe neither sent them back, nor set to work with them. He delayed from day to day, occupied with other things. At last Büttner became uneasy, and sent for the prisms, saying they should be lent again at a future period, but that at any rate he must have them returned. Forced thus to part with them, yet unwilling to send them back without making one effort, he told the messenger to wait, and taking up a prism, looked through it at the white wall of his room, expecting to see the whole wall coloured in various tints, according to the Newtonian statement. To his astonishment he saw nothing of the kind. He saw that the wall remained as white as before, and that only there, where an opaque interfered, could a more or less decisive colour be observed; that the window-frames were most coloured, while the light gray heaven without showed no trace of colour. "It needed very little meditation to discover that to produce colour a *limit* was necessary, and instinctively I exclaimed, 'Newton's theory is false!'" There could be no thought of sending back the prisms at such a juncture; so he wrote to Büttner begging for a longer loan, and set to work in real earnest.

This was an unhappy commencement. He began with a false conception of Newton's theory, and thought he was overthrowing Newton when, in fact, he was combating his own error. The Newtonian theory does *not* say that a white surface seen through a prism appears coloured, but that it appears white, its edges only coloured. The fancied discovery of Newton's error stung him like a gadfly. He multiplied experiments, turned the subject incessantly over in his mind, and instead of going the simple way to work, and learning the a, b, c of the science, tried the very longest of all short cuts, namely, experiment on insuf-

ficient knowledge. He made a white disc on a black ground, and this, seen through the prism, gave him the spectrum, as in the Newtonian theory; but he found that a black disc on a white ground also produced the same effect. "If Light, said I to myself, resolves itself into various colours in the first case; then must Darkness also resolve itself into various colours in this second case." And thus he came to the conclusion that Colour is not contained in Light, but is the product of an intermingling of Light and Darkness.

"Having no experience in such matters, and not knowing the direction I ought to take, I addressed myself to a Physicist of repute, begging him to verify the results I had arrived at. I had already told him my doubts of the Newtonian hypothesis, and hoped to see him at once share my conviction. But how great was my surprise when he assured me that the phenomenon I spoke of was already known, and perfectly explained by the Newtonian theory. In vain I protested and combated his arguments, he held stolidly to the *credo*, and told me to repeat my experiments in a *camera obscura*."

Instead of quieting him, this rebuff only turned him away from all Physicists, that is, from all men who had special knowledge on the subject, and made him pursue in silence his own path. Friends were amused and interested by his experiments; their ignorance made them ready adherents. The Duchess Luise showed especial interest; and to her he afterward dedicated his "Farbenlehre." The duke also shared the enthusiasm. The Duke of Gotha placed at his disposal a magnificent laboratory. Prince August sent him splendid prisms from England. Princes and poetasters believed he was going to dethrone Newton; men of science only laughed at his pretension, and would not pay his theory the honour of a refutation. One fact he records as very noticeable, namely, that

he could count Anatomists, Chemists, Littérateurs, and Philosophers, such as Loder, Sömmering, Göttling, Wolff, Forster, Schelling (and, subsequently, Hegel), among his adherents; but not one Physicist — *hingegen keinen Physiker!* Nor does he, in recording this fact, see that it is destructive of his pretensions.

What claim had Anatomists, Littérateurs, and Philosophers to be heard in such a controversy? Who would listen to a mathematician appealing to the testimony of zoologists against the whole body of mathematicians past and present? There is this much, however, to be said for Goethe: he had already experienced neglect from professional authorities when he discovered the intermaxillary bone, and when, in the "Metamorphoses of Plants," he laid before them a real discovery, the truth of which he profoundly felt. He was prepared therefore for a similar disregard of his claims when he not only produced a new theory, but attacked the highest scientific authority. He considered that Newtonians looked on him as a natural enemy. He thought them steadfastly bent on maintaining established prejudice. He thought they were a guild united against all innovation by common interest and common ignorance. Their opposition never made him pause; their arguments never made him swerve. He thought them profoundly in error when they imagined optics to be a part of mathematics; and as he did not understand mathematics, he could not appreciate their arguments.

His "Beiträge zur Optik," which appeared in 1791, was a sort of feeler thrown out to the great public. The public was utterly unsympathising. The ignorant had no interest in such matters, and certainly would not address themselves to a poet for instruction; the physicists saw that he was wrong. "Everywhere," he says, "I found incredulity as to my competence in such a matter; everywhere a sort of repulsion at my

efforts; and the more learned and well-informed the men were, the more decided was their opposition."

For years and years he continued his researches with a patience worthy of admiration. Opposition moved him not: it rather helped to increase his obstinacy. It extorted from him expressions of irritability and polemical bad taste, which astound us in a man so calm and tolerant. Perhaps, as Kingsley once suggested to me, he had a vague feeling that his conclusions were not sound, and felt the jealousy incident to imperfect conviction. Where his conviction was perfect, he was calm. The neglect of his Metamorphoses — the denial of his discovery of the intermaxillary bone — the indifference with which his essays on Comparative Anatomy were treated — all this he bore with philosophic serenity. But on the "Farbenlehre" he was always sensitive, and in old age ludicrously so. Eckermann records a curious conversation, wherein he brings forward a fact he has observed, which contradicts the theory of colours; and Goethe not only grows angry, but refuses to admit the fact. In this matter of colour he showed himself morally weak, as well as intellectually weak. "As for what I have done as a poet," said the old man once, "I take no pride in it whatever. Excellent poets have lived at the same time with myself; more excellent poets have lived before me, and will come after me. But that in my century I am the only person who knows the truth in the difficult science of colours — of that, I say, I am not a little proud."

The reader will doubtless be curious to know something of this Theory of Colours; and although it must necessarily appear greatly to its disadvantage in the brief abstract for which alone I can find space, an abstract without the numerous illustrations and experiments which give the theory a plausible aspect, the kernel of the matter will appear.

The Newtonian theory is that white light is composed of the seven prismatic colours, *i. e.* rays having different degrees of refrangibility. Goethe says it is not composed at all, but is the simplest and most homogeneous thing known.[1] It is absurd to call it composed of *colours*, for every light which has taken a colour is darker than colourless light. Brightness cannot therefore be a compound of darkness. There are but two pure colours, *blue* and *yellow*, both of which have a tendency to become *red*, through *violet* and *orange;* there are also two mixtures, *green* and *purple*. Every other colour is a degree of one of these, or is impure. Colours originate in the modification of Light by outward circumstances. They are not developed *out* of Light, but *by* it. For the phenomena of Colour, there is demanded Light and Darkness. Nearest the Light appears a colour we name *yellow;* nearest the Darkness, a colour we name *blue*. Mix these two and you have *green*.

Starting from the fundamental error of the simplicity of Light, Goethe undertakes to explain all the phenomena of Colour by means of what he calls the *Opaques* — the media. He maintains that on the one hand there is light, and on the other darkness; if a semi-transparent medium be brought between the two, from these contrasts and this medium, Colours are developed, contrasted in like manner, but soon through a reciprocal relation tending to a point of reunion.

The highest degree of Light seen through a medium very slightly thickened appears *yellow*. If the density of the medium be increased, or if its volume become

[1] "Let us thank the goda," exclaims Schelling, "that they have emancipated us from the Newtonian spectrum (*spectrum* truly) of composed light. We owe this to the genius to whom our debt is already so large." ("Zeitschrift für specul. Philos.," ii. p. 60.) To the same effect Hegel in his "Encyclopädie der philos. Wissenschaften."

greater, the light will gradually assume a *yellow-red*, which deepens at last to a *ruby*.

The highest degree of Darkness seen through a semi-transparent medium, which is itself illuminated by a light striking on it, gives a *blue* colour, which becomes paler as the density of the medium is increased; but on the contrary becomes darker and deeper as the medium becomes more transparent. In the least degree of dimness short of absolute transparency, the deep *blue* becomes the most beautiful *violet*.

There are many interesting facts adduced in illustration. Thus, smoke appears yellow or red before a light ground, blue before a dark ground; the blue colour, at the under part of a candle-flame, is also a case of blue seen opposite a dark ground. Light transmitted through the air is yellow, orange, or red, according to the density of the air; Darkness transmitted through the air is blue, as is the case of the sky, or distant mountains.

He tells a curious anecdote in illustration of this blueness of darkness. A painter had an old portrait of a theologian to clean; the wet sponge passing over the black velvet dress, suddenly changed it to a *light blue plush*. Puzzled at this truly remarkable phenomenon, and not understanding how light blue could be the ground of deep black, he was in great grief at the thought of having thus ruined the picture. The next morning, to his joy, he found the black velvet had resumed its pristine splendour. To satisfy his curiosity, he could not refrain from wetting a corner once more, and again he saw the *blue* appear. Goethe was informed of the phenomenon, which was once more produced, in his presence. "I explained it," he says, "by my doctrine of the semi-opaque medium. The original painter, in order to give additional depth to his black, may have passed some particular varnish

over it; on being washed, this varnish imbibed some moisture, and hence became semi-opaque, in consequence of which the *black* beneath immediately appeared *blue*." The explanation is very ingenious; nor does the Edinburgh reviewer's answer seem to meet the question, when he says:[1] "As there is no gum or resin, or varnish of any kind that possesses the property of yielding blue or any other colour by being wetted, we have no doubt the varnish had been worn off, or else the picture never had been varnished." It is not a question of wetted varnish yielding blue, but of wetted varnish furnishing the medium through which black appears blue. His own explanation, however, is probably correct. He assumes that there was no varnish, and that the particles of bodies which produce blackness, on the usual theory, are smaller than those which produce blue or any other colour; and if we increase the size of the particles which produce blackness by the smallest quantity, they yield the *blue* colour described by Goethe. The action of the water swelled them a little, and thus gave them the size which fitted them to reflect *blue* rays.

Goethe's theory loses much of its seductive plausibility when thus reduced to its simplest expression. Let us, however, do the same for the Newtonian theory, and then estimate their comparative value. Newton assumes that white Light is a compound; and he proves this assumption by decomposing a beam of light into its elements. These elements are rays, having different degrees of refrangibility, separable from each other by different media. Each ray produces its individual colour. Not only will the beam of white Light in passing through a prism be separated into its constituent rays, or colours, but these rays may be again collected by a large lens, and, in being thus brought together, again reappear as white

[1] *Edin. Rev.*, Oct. 1840, p. 117.

Light. There are few theories in science which present a more satisfactory union of logic and experiment.

It cannot be denied that Goethe's theory is also extremely plausible; and he has supported it with so many accurate experiments and admirable observations, that to this day it has not only found ardent advocates, even among men of science, though these are few, but has very sorely perplexed many Newtonians, who, relying on the mathematical accuracy of their own theory, have contemptuously dismissed Goethe's speculation instead of victoriously refuting it. His obstinacy was excusable, since believing himself to be in the right, he challenged refutation, and no one picked up his gauntlet. They declined in contempt; he interpreted this as bigotry. He tried to get the French Academy to make a report on his work. This honour was withheld: Cuvier disdainfully declaring that such a work was not one to occupy an Academy; Delambre answering all solicitations with this phrase: "Des observations, des expériences, et surtout ne commençons pas par attaquer Newton." As if the "Farbenlehre" were not founded on observations and experiments! as if the glory of Newton were to stand inviolate before all things! Goethe might well resent such treatment. If he was wrong in his theory, if his experiments were incomplete, why were these errors not pointed out? To be in contradiction with Newton might offer a presumption against the theory; but Newtonians were called upon not to expound the contradiction between Goethe and Newton, which was vociferously announced, but the contradiction between Goethe and Truth, which they contemptuously asserted.

As this is a branch of science in which I can pretend to no competence, and as I have met with no decisive refutation of Goethe which can be quoted here, I should consider it sufficient to say that the fact of the vast

majority of physicists in Europe refusing to pay any attention to the "Farbenlehre," although not in itself more than a presumption, is, nevertheless, a presumption so very strong as only to be set aside by stringently coercive evidence. Looking at the "Farbenlehre" from the impartial, if imperfect, point of view of an outsider, I should say that not only has Goethe manifestly misunderstood Newton, but has presented a theory which is based on a radical mistake. The mistake is that of treating Darkness as a positive quality, rather than as a simple negation of Light. By means of this Darkness, as a *coöperating agent* with Light, colours are said to arise. Stripped of all the ambiguities of language, the theory affirms that Light is itself perfectly colourless until mingled with various degrees of Nothing — or, in other words, until it suffers various diminutions; and with each diminution the colours become of a deeper hue. This may seem too preposterous for belief; yet what is Darkness but the negation of Light? It is true that Goethe has in one place named Darkness, in the abstract, a pure negation; but it is not less true that in the construction of his theory, Darkness plays the part of a positive; and necessarily so; for if we once conceive it as a simple negative, the theory falls to the ground. Light being assumed as colourless, no diminution of the colourless can give colours. Unless Darkness be positive, — coöperative, — we are left to seek the elements of colour *in* Light; and this is precisely where the Newtonian theory finds it.

It was an old idea that the different confines of shadow variously modify light, producing various colours. This Newton has elaborately refuted ("Optics," Part ii., Book i.), proving by simple experiments that all colours show themselves indifferently in the confines of shadow; and that when rays which differ in refrangibility are separated from one another, and

any one is considered apart, "the colour of the light which it composes cannot be changed by any refraction or reflection whatever, as it ought to be were colours nothing else than modifications of light caused by refractions, reflections, and shadows."

It should be emphatically stated that the highest physical authorities have borne testimony to the accuracy of Goethe's facts; and as these facts are exceedingly numerous, and often highly important, the value of his optical studies must be estimated as considerable. He was a man of genius, and he laboured with the passionate patience of genius. But in awarding our admiration to the man, we may withhold assent from his theory. That which has exasperated men of science, and caused them to speak slightingly of his labours, is the bitterly polemical tone of contempt with which he announced a discovery which they could not recognise as true. He was aggressive and weak. He vociferated that Newton was in error; and a casual glance at his supposed detection of the error discovered a fundamental misconception. If we stand aloof from these heats of personal conflict, and regard the subject with a calmer eye, we shall see that the question simply reduces itself to this: which of the two theories offers the fullest and clearest explanation of the facts?

Light and Colours are, like Sound and Tones, to be viewed as objective phenomena, related to certain external conditions; or as subjective phenomena, related to certain sensations. Before asking What is Light or Sound? we must consider whether we seek the objective fact, or the subjective sensation. Every one admits that, apart from a sensitive organism, the objective phenomena of Light and Sound exist, although *not* as the Light and Sound known in our sensations. But as we can only know them through our sensations, it seems eminently philosophical to begin our study

with these. And this Goethe has done. He first unfolds the laws of physiological colours, *i. e.* the modifications of the retina; and his immense services in this direction have been cordially recognised by Physiologists. Since, however, we can never learn thus what are the external *conditions* of the phenomena, we have to seek in objective facts such an explanation as will best guide us. The assumption of rays having different degrees of refrangibility may one day turn out to be erroneous; but it is an assumption which colligates the facts better than any other hitherto propounded, and therefore it is accepted. By regarding both Sound and Light as produced from waves of an elastic medium, acoustic and optic phenomena are reducible to *calculation*. It is true they thus incur Goethe's reproach of ceasing to be concrete objects to the mind, and becoming mathematical symbols; but this is the very ambition of scientific research: a point to which I shall presently return. Let us compare the objective and subjective facts.

If an elastic rod be made to vibrate, the ear perceives nothing until the vibrations reach eight in a second, at which point the lowest tone becomes audible; if the rapidity of the vibrations be now constantly accelerated, tones higher and higher in the scale become audible, till the vibrations reach twenty-four thousand in a second, at which point the ear again fails to detect any sound. In like manner it is calculated that when vibrations reach 483 billions in a second, Light, or rather the red ray, begins to manifest itself to the retina; with increasing rapidity of vibration, the colours pass into orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet, till 727 billions are reached, at which point no *light* is perceptible. Here chemical action begins; and the rays are called chemical rays; as at the other end of the spectrum they are called heat rays. These are objective *conditions* which have been rigorously

ascertained: and most important results have been arrived at through them.

The subjective facts according to Goethe would lead to the belief that Tones are the product of Sound and Silence, as colours are of Light and Darkness. Sound is made various (in tones) by various intermixtures with Silence. Descending from the highest audible note there is a gradual retardation of the vibrations, caused by the gradual encroachments of Silence, until at length Silence predominates and no Sound is heard. Suppose this hypothesis granted, we shall still have to ask, what are the *conditions* of this Silence? If these are retardations of vibration, we may dispense with the hypothetical Silence. By similar reasoning we dispense with the hypothetical Darkness.

The assumption of different rays of unequal refrangibility is not only supported by the prismatic decomposition and recomposition of light, but also finds confirmation in the law of Refraction discovered by Snellius. And the consequence drawn from it, namely, that the relation of the sine of incidence, though constant for each colour, *varies* in the different colours of the spectrum, brings the whole question within the domain of mathematical calculation. The phenomena cease to be *qualitative* only, and become *quantitative:* they are measurable, and are measured. On Goethe's theory, granting its truth, the phenomena are not measurable; and whoever glances into a modern work on Optics will see that the precision and extent to which calculation has been carried, are in themselves sufficient grounds for assigning the preference to the theory which admits such calculation. For as Copernicus profoundly says, "It is by no means necessary that hypotheses should be true, nor even seem true; it is enough if they *reconcile calculation with observations.*"[1]

[1] Copernicus: "De Revolutionibus Orbium Cœlestium," 1566, *præfatio.*

Goethe's want of acquaintance with Mathematics and with the Methods of Physical Science prevented his understanding the defect in his own theory, and the manifest superiority of the theory which he attacked. He opposed every mathematical treatment of the subject as mischievous; and Hegel, who has shown himself still more opposed to the Methods of Science, applauds him on this very point.

"I raised the whole school of mathematicians against me," says Goethe, "and people were greatly amazed that one who had no insight into Mathematics could venture to contradict Newton. *For that Physics could exist independently of Mathematics no one seemed to have the slightest suspicion.*" Nor has that suspicion gained yet any ground with men in the least conversant with Physics, however necessary it may sometimes have been to protest against too exclusive an employment of Mathematics. But the misconception which lies at the bottom of Goethe's polemics was a very natural one to a poet never trained in Mathematical or Experimental science, and unaware of the peculiar position occupied by Mathematics, as the great Instrument of research. In his essay, "Ueber Mathematik und deren Misbrauch,"[1] he compares the philosopher employing such an instrument to a man who should invent a machine for drawing a cork, an operation which two arms and hands very easily effect.

To make his error intelligible, let us suppose a man of great intellectual acuteness and energy suddenly to light upon the idea that our chemical theories were vitiated by a false basis — that the atomic theory was not only an hypothesis, but an hypothesis which misrepresented the order of Nature; there being, in truth, none of the quantitative relations that are presupposed in that theory. Imagine the reformer setting to work, multiplying experiments, inventing explana-

[1] "Werke," xl. p. 468.

tions, disregarding all that the accumulated experience of ages had stored up on this very matter, and above all despising, as useless or worse, the very instrument which rescues Chemistry from rough guess-work, and elevates it into the possibility of a science — the instrument known as the Balance. It is probable that our reformer would make many curious observations, some of them quite new. It is probable that he would in many directions stimulate research. But it is certain that he would be hopelessly wrong in his theories, for he would necessarily be imperfect in his data. Without the delicate control of the Balance, chemical experiment can never become *quantitative;* and without quantitative knowledge there can be no chemical science strictly so called, but only *qualitative, i.e.* approximative knowledge. No amount of observation will render observation precise unless it can be measured. No force of intellect will supply the place of an Instrument. You may watch falling bodies for an eternity, but without Mathematics mere watching will yield no law of gravitation. You may mix acids and alkalis together with prodigality, but no amount of experiment will yield the secret of their composition, if you have flung away the Balance.

Goethe flung away the Balance. Hegel boldly says it is Goethe's merit — *das Prisma heruntergebracht zu haben.* He praises the "pure sense of Nature," which in the poet rebelled against Newton's "barbarism of Reflection." To the same effect Schelling, who does not hesitate to choose it as the very ground for proclaiming Goethe's superiority over the Newtonians, that "instead of the artificially confused and disfiguring experiments of the Newtonians, he places the purest, simplest verdicts of Nature herself before us;" he adds, "it is not surprising that the blind and slavish followers of Newton should oppose researches which prove that precisely the very section of Physics, in which up

to this time they have imagined the most positive, nay almost geometric evidence, to be on their side, is based on a fundamental error."[1]

This point of Method, if properly examined, will help to elucidate the whole question of Goethe's aptitude for dealing with physical science. The native direction of his mind is visible in his optical studies as decisively as in his poetry; that direction was toward the *concrete* phenomenon, not toward abstractions. He desired to explain the phenomena of colour, and in Mathematics these phenomena disappear; that is to say, the very *thing* to be studied is hurried out of sight and masked by abstractions. This was utterly repugnant to his mode of conceiving Nature. The marvellous phenomena of polarised light in the hands of mathematicians excited his boundless scorn. "One knows not," he says, "whether a body or a mere ruin lies buried under those formulas."[2] The name of Biot threw him into a rage; and he was continually laughing at the Newtonians about their Prisms, and Spectra, as if Newtonians were pedants who preferred their dusky rooms to the free breath of heaven. He always spoke of observations made in his garden, or with a simple prism in the sunlight, as if the natural and simple Method were much more certain than the artificial Method of Science. In this he betrayed his misapprehension of Method. He thought that Nature revealed herself to the patient observer —

"Und was sie deinem Geist nicht offenbaren mag,
Das zwingst du ihr nicht ab mit Hebeln und mit Schrauben."

"And what she does not reveal to the Mind will not be extorted from her by Levers and Screws." Hence his failure; hence also his success; for we must not

[1] Schelling: "Zeitschrift für spekulative Philos.," ii. p. 60.
[2] "Werke," xl. 473.

forget that if as a contribution to Optics his "Farbenlehre" be questionable, as a contribution to the knowledge of colour demanded by Artists it is very valuable. Painters have repeatedly acknowledged the advantage they have derived from it; and I remember hearing Riedel, at Rome, express the most unbounded enthusiasm for it; averring that, as a colourist, he had learned more from the "Farbenlehre" than from all the other teachers and books he had ever known. To artists and physiologists — *i. e.* to those who are mainly concerned with the phenomena of colour as perceptions, and who demand qualitative rather than quantitative knowledge — his labours have a high value; and even physicists must admit that, however erroneous the theory and imperfect the method he has adopted, still the immense accumulation and systematisation of facts, and the ingenuity with which he explains them, deserve serious respect. As Bacon felicitously says, a tortoise on the right path will beat a racer on the wrong path; and if it be true that Goethe was on the wrong path, it is not less true that he shows the thews and sinews of a racer.

It is with other feelings that we contemplate him labouring in the organic sciences. There the native tendencies of his mind and the acquired tendencies of education better fitted him for success. Biology has peculiar fascinations for the poetical mind, and has seduced several poets to become physiologists. Mathematics are not required. Concrete observations furnish the materials for a keen and comprehensive comparison.

Let it be distinctly understood, and that not on the testimony of the admiring biographer, but on some of the highest scientific testimonies in Europe,[1] that in the

[1] In the first edition of this work several passages were quoted in support of the assertion in the text; but one effect of this chapter has been to render such evidence superfluous, Goethe's

organic sciences Goethe holds an eminent place — eminent not because of his rank as a poet, but in spite of it. Let it be understood that in these sciences he is not to be treated as a poet, a facile amateur, but as a *thinker* who, having mastered sufficient knowledge to render his path secure, gave an impulse to the minds of contemporaries and successors, which is not even yet arrested.

Goethe was a thinker in science, a manipulator of scientific ideas. He was not one of those laborious and meritorious workers who with microscope and scalpel painfully collect the materials from which Science emerges. He worked, too, in his way, and everywhere sought in the order of nature for verification of the ideas which he had conceived *à priori*. Do not, however, mistake him for a metaphysician. He was a positive thinker on the *à priori* Method; a Method vicious only when the seeker rests contented with his own assumptions, or seeks only a *partial* hasty confrontation with facts — what Bacon calls *notiones temerè à rebus abstractas;* a Method eminently philosophic when it merely *goes before* the facts, anticipating what will be the tardy conclusions of experience. The *à priori* Method is a bright and brilliant instrument. It will cut the fingers when clumsily handled. It will cut deep into the truth if rightly used. It was so used by Kepler and Goethe, who first looked upon Nature from the heights, but having seen or fancied they saw something in the

position in science becoming daily more widely recognised. The following references are therefore all that need now be given: Auguste St. Hilaire: "Morphologie Végétale," i. p. 15. Oscar Schmidt: "Goethe's Verhältniss zu den organischen Wissenschaften," p. 10. Johannes Müller: "Ueber phantastische Gesichtserscheinungen," p. 104. Cuvier: "Histoire des Sciences Naturelles," iv. p. 316. Isidore, Geoffroy St. Hilaire: "Essais de Zoologie générale," p. 139. Owen: "Archetype and Homologies of the Skeleton," p. 3. Helmholtz: "Allgemeine Monatsschrift," May, 1853. Virchow: "Goethe als Naturforscher."

plains, at once descended to verify the truth of their observation.

We will glance at his achievements in this field. The intermaxillary bone[1] was long a bone of contention among anatomists. Vesalius — one of the grandest and boldest of the early pioneers who wrote against Galen, as the philosophers wrote against Aristotle — declared, and with justice, that Galen's anatomy was not founded on the dissection of the *human* body, but on that of animals. A proof, said he, is that "Galen indicates a separate bone connected with the maxillary by sutures: a bone which, as every anatomist can satisfy himself, exists only in animals." The Galenists were in arms. They could bring no fact in evidence, but *that* was of very little consequence; if facts were deficient, was not hypothesis always ready? Sylvius, for example, boldly said that man *had formerly* an intermaxillary bone. If he has it no longer, he *ought* to have it. It is luxury, it is sensuality, which has gradually deprived man of this bone.[2] What has not luxury been made to answer for! The dispute was carried down through centuries, no one attempting to demonstrate anatomically the existence of the bone. Camper actually raised this presumed absence of the bone into the one distinguishing mark separating man from the ape; which is doubly unfortunate, for in the first place the bone is not absent in man, and secondly, in as far as it can be considered absent in man, it is equally absent in the chimpanzee, the highest of the

[1] It is the centre bone of the upper jaw — that which contains the incisor teeth.

[2] This same Sylvius (Le Boë) it was who replied to Vesalius that Galen was not wrong when he described man as having seven bones in his sternum (there are only three): "for," said he, "in ancient times the robust chests of heroes might very well have had more bones than our degenerate day can boast." It is impossible to decide upon what might have been; but the mummies are ancient enough, and they have no more bones than we.

apes.[1] Thus was anatomy a treacherous ally in this question, although Camper knew not how treacherous.

This slight historical sketch will help to show that the discovery, if unimportant, was at least far from easy; indeed, so little did it lie in the track of general knowledge, that it was at first received with contemptuous disbelief, even by men so eminent as Blumenbach,[2] and it was forty years gaining general acceptance, although Loder, Spix, and Sömmering at once recognised it. Camper, to whom Goethe sent the manuscript, found that it was *très élégant, admirablement bien écrit, c'est à dire d'une main admirable*, but thought a better Latin style desirable. Goethe began to despise the pedantry of professional men who would deny the testimony of their five senses in favour of an old doctrine; and he admirably says, "The phrases men are accustomed to repeat incessantly end by becoming convictions, *and ossify the organs of intelligence.*"[3]

The most remarkable point in this discovery is less the discovery than the Method which led to it. The intermaxillary bone in animals contains the incisor teeth. Man has incisor teeth; and Goethe, fully

[1] Blumenbach had already noted that in some young apes and baboons no trace was discoverable of the bone.

[2] See his "Comparative Anatomy," translated by Lawrence; and the translator's note, p. 60.

[3] Since the first edition of this work was published, I have come upon a piquant illustration of the not very honourable tendency in men to plume themselves on the knowledge of a discovery which they had formerly rejected. Vicq d'Azyr, "Discours sur l'Anatomie" ("Œuvres," iv. 159), mentioning his discovery of the intermaxillary, adds, "J'ai appris de M. Camper, dans son dernier voyage à Paris, *que cet os lui est connu depuis très longtemps.*" Now this same Camper, on receiving the anonymous dissertation in which Goethe propounded the discovery, said, "Je dois ré-examiner tout cela;" but on learning that Goethe was the author, he wrote to Merck that he had "convinced himself that the bone did not exist" (see Virchow: "Goethe als Naturforscher," p. 79); yet no sooner does a great anatomist tell him that the bone exists, than he complacently declares, "I have known it a long while."

impressed with the conviction that there was Unity in Nature, boldly said, if man has the teeth in common with animals, he must have the bone in common with animals. Anatomists, lost in details, and wanting that fundamental conception which now underlies all philosophical anatomy, saw no abstract necessity for such identity of composition; the more so, because *evidence* seemed wholly against it. But Goethe was not only guided by the true philosophic conception, he was also instinctively led to the true Method of demonstration, namely, Comparison of the various modifications which this bone underwent in the animal series. This Method has now become *the* Method; and we require to throw ourselves into the historical position to appreciate its novelty, at the time he employed it. He found on comparison that the bone varied with the nutrition of the animal, and the size of its teeth. He found, moreover, that in some animals the bone was not separated from the jaw; and that in children the sutures were traceable. He admitted that seen from the front no trace of the sutures was visible, but on the interior there were unmistakable traces. Examination of the fœtal skull has since set the point beyond dispute. I have seen one where the bone was distinctly separated; and I possess a skull, the ossification of which is far advanced at the parietal sutures, yet internally faint traces of the intermaxillary are visible.[1]

Goethe made his discovery in 1784, and communicated it to several anatomists. Loder mentions it in his "Compendium" in 1787.

Respecting Goethe's claim to the honour of this discovery, I have recently discovered a fact which is of

[1] These might be considered abnormal cases. But M. J. Weber has devised a method of treating the skull with dilute nitric acid, which makes the separation of the bones perfect. "Froriep's Notizen," 1828, bd. 19, 282. Virchow: l. c., p. 80.

great or small significance according to the views we hold respecting such claims; namely, whether the clear enunciation of an idea, though never carried out in detail, suffices to give priority; or whether, in the words of Owen,[1] "he becomes the true discoverer who establishes the truth: and the sign of the proof is the general acceptance. Whoever, therefore, resumes the investigation of a neglected or repudiated doctrine, elicits its true demonstration, and discovers and explains the nature of the errors which have led to its tacit or declared rejection, may calmly and confidently await the acknowledgments of his rights in its discovery." If we hold the former view, we must assign the discovery of the intermaxillary in man to Vicq d'Azyr; if we hold the latter, to Goethe. In the "Traité d'Anatomie et de Physiologie," which the brilliant anatomist published in 1786, we not only find him insisting on the then novel idea of an uniform plan in the structure of organic beings, according to which nature "semble opérer toujours d'après un modèle primitif et général dont elle ne s'écarte qu'à regret et dont on rencontre partout des traces;"[2] but we find this explicit illustration given among others: "Peut-on s'y refuser enfin" (*i. e.* to admit the traces of a general plan) "en comparant les os maxillaires antérieurs que j'appelle *incisifs* dans les quadrupèdes, avec cette pièce osseuse qui soutient les dents incisives supérieures dans l'homme, où elle est séparée de l'os maxillaire par une petite felure très remarquable dans les fœtus, à peine visible dans les adultes, et dont personne n'avoit connu l'usage?" In a subsequent passage of the second "Discours" he says: "Toutes ces dents sont soutenues dans la mâchoire antérieure par un os

[1] Owen: "Homologies of the Skeleton," p. 76. Comp. also Malpighi: "Opera Posthuma," 1697, p. 5.

[2] Vicq d'Azyr, "Œuvres," iv. p. 26. The work is there called "Discours sur l'Anatomie."

que j'ai décrit sous le nom d'incisif ou labial, que quelques-uns appellent intermaxillaire, que l'on a découvert depuis peu dans les morses, *et dont j'ai reconnu les traces dans les os maxillaires supérieurs du fœtus humain.*"[1]

The reader will remark that this is not simply the announcement of the fact, but is adduced in illustration of the very same doctrine which Goethe invoked. The "Traité d'Anatomie," as we have seen, was published in 1786; that is to say, two years after Goethe had made his discovery; and Sömmering, in writing to Merck,[2] says: "I have expressed my opinion on Vicq d'Azyr's work in the *Götting. Gelehrt. Anzeig.* It is the best we have. But as far as the work has yet gone Goethe is not mentioned in it." From which it may be inferred that Sömmering supposed Vicq d'Azyr to have been acquainted with Goethe's contemporary labours; but against such a supposition we must remember that, if Germany took note of what was passing in France, discoveries made in Germany travelled with great slowness across the Rhine; and in illustration of this slowness we may note that Geoffroy St. Hilaire, who was several years afterward nobly working out conceptions of Philosophical Anatomy in a spirit so identical with that of Goethe, was utterly unconscious of the existence of a predecessor, and noticing the monograph of G. Fischer, said: "Gœthes aurait le premier découvert l'interpariétal dans quelques rongeurs, et se serait contenté d'en faire mention par une note manuscrite sur un exemplaire d'un traité d'anatomie comparée."[3]

But the conclusive point is this: although the

[1] *Ibid*, p. 159.
[2] "Briefe an Merck," p. 493.
[3] "Philosophie Anatomique," ii. p. 55. Geoffroy was afterward very proud to have the suffrage of Gœthes; and Geoffroy's son has spoken most honourably of the coincidence between the speculations of his father and the poet.

"Traité d'Anatomie" did not appear till 1786, the discovery of the intermaxillary was published by Vicq d'Azyr in the Académie des Sciences for 1779,[1] five years before Goethe announced his discovery to Herder. The question of priority is therefore settled. The Frenchman had no need of any acquaintance with what the German poet had worked out; and Merck's astonishment at finding Goethe's "so-called discovery accepted by Vicq d'Azyr" was wholly misplaced; but can we be equally sure that Goethe was altogether ignorant of his predecessor? I think he was. The sudden enthusiasm, the laborious investigation, the jubilate of triumph, are evidences that if ever his predecessor's discovery had come under his notice (which is highly improbable) it was completely forgotten; and we may judge how completely Vicq d'Azyr's announcement had been without echo in the scientific world, from the fact that the three most illustrious men of the day, Camper, Blumenbach, and Sömmering, knew nothing of it, and denied the existence of the bone Goethe claimed to have discovered. Thus, in assigning priority to Vicq d'Azyr, we by no means diminish Goethe's merit. He it was who thoroughly worked out the discovery; he it was who gave it a fixed and definite place in science; he it is who is always named as the discoverer.

The only importance of this discovery is the philosophic Method which it illustrates; the firm belief it implies that all organisms are constructed on an uniform plan, and that Comparative Anatomy is only valid because such a plan is traceable. In our day it seems an easy conception. We are so accustomed to consider all the variations in organic structures as

[1] In the first edition I stated that "from a note to Blumenbach's 'Comparative Anatomy' (p. 19), it seems as if Vicq d'Azyr had made this observation as early as 1780." The date in the text is given by Vicq d'Azyr himself. ("Œuvres," iv. 159.)

modifications of a type, that we can hardly realise to ourselves any other conception. That it was by no means an obvious idea, nor one easy to apply, may be seen in two brilliant applications — the metamorphosis of plants, and the vertebral theory of the skull.

Place a flower in the hands of the cleverest man of your acquaintance, providing always he has not read modern works of science, and assure him that leaf, calyx, corolla, bud, pistil, and stamen, differing as they do in colour and in form, are nevertheless all modified leaves; assure him that flower and fruit are but modifications of one typical form, which is the leaf; and if he has any confidence in your knowledge he may accept the statement, but assuredly it will seem to him a most incomprehensible paradox. Place him before a human skeleton, and calling his attention to its manifold forms, assure him that every bone is either a vertebra, or the appendage to a vertebra, and that the skull is a congeries of vertebræ under various modifications; he will, as before, accept your statement, perhaps; but he will, as before, think it one of the refinements of transcendental speculation to be arrived at only by philosophers. Yet both of these astounding propositions became first principles in Morphology; and in the History of Science both of these propositions are to be traced to Goethe. Botanists and anatomists have, of course, greatly modified the views he promulgated, and have substituted views nearer and nearer the truth, without yet being quite at one. But he gave the impulse to their efforts.

While botanists and anatomists were occupied in analysis, striving to distinguish separate parts, and give them distinct names, his poetical and philosophic mind urged him to seek the supreme synthesis, and reduce all diversities to a higher unity. In his poem addressed to Christiane he says:

"Thou, my love, art perplexed with the endless seeming confusion
Of the luxuriant wealth which in the garden is spread;
Name upon name thou hearest, and in thy dissatisfied hearing,
With a barbarian noise one drives another along.
All the forms resemble, yet none is the same as another;
Thus the whole of the throng points at a deep-hidden law."[1]

To prove this identity was no easy task. He imagined an ideal typical plant (*Urpflanze*), of which all actual plants were the manifold realisations; and this I cannot but agree with Schleiden in considering a conception at once misleading and infelicitous. He was happier in the conception of all the various organs of the plant as modifications of one fundamental type; this type he names the *Leaf*. Not that we are to understand the metamorphosis of plants to be analogous to the metamorphosis of animals (an error into which I fell in my first edition, as Ferdinand Cohn properly points out); nor indeed is it such a metamorphosis at all. The pistil and petal are not first developed into leaves, and from these leaves changed into petal and pistil; as a caterpillar develops into a grub, and the grub into a butterfly. This would be metamorphosis. Instead of this we must conceive the whole plant as a succession of repetitions of the original type variously modified; in some of these repetitions the modification has been slight, in others considerable. The two typical forms are stem and leaf. From the seed there is an ascending and a descending axis, formed of a succession of stems: the ascending axis is called the aerial stem; the descending axis is the root. From both of these stems lateral stems or branches are given off; and from these again others. The Leaf is the second type: it forms all the other organs by various modifications. Widely as a pistil differs from

[1] Whewell's translation: "Hist. of Inductive Sciences," iii. 360.

a petal, and both from an ordinary leaf, they are disclosed as identical by the history of their development.

It is impossible to be even superficially acquainted with biological speculations, and not to recognise the immense importance of the recognition of a Type. As Helmholtz truly observes, "the labours of botanists and zoologists did little more than collect materials, until they learned to dispose them in such a series that the laws of dependence and a generalised type could be elicited. Here the great mind of our poet found a field suited to it; and the time was favourable. Enough material had been collected in botany and comparative anatomy for a clear survey to be taken; and although his contemporaries all wandered without a compass, or contented themselves with a dry registration of facts, he was able to introduce into science two leading ideas of infinite fruitfulness."

And here the question presents itself: Is Goethe rightfully entitled to the honour universally awarded to him of having founded the Morphology of Plants? We must again invoke the distinction previously stated (p. 91). No one denies that the doctrine was so entirely novel that botanists at first rejected it with contempt, and only consented to accept it when some eminent botanists had shown it to be true. No one denies that Goethe worked it out; if any predecessor had conceived the idea, no one had carried the idea into its manifold applications. But he has himself named Linnæus and Wolff as his precursors; and it is of some interest to ascertain in what degree those precursors have claim to the honour of the discovery.

It has been remarked by the eminent botanist, Ferdinand Cohn,[1] that the great Linnæus mingled with his observations much fantastic error, which the poet Goethe was the first to eliminate. But Doctor Hooker,

[1] "Goethe und die Metamorphosen der Pflanzen," in the Deutsches Museum of Prutz, iv., Jan. 1862.

while admitting the metaphysical and speculative nature of the matter which Linnæus has mixed up with his statements, is disposed to value them highly. "The fundamental passage is in the 'Systema Naturæ,' in the introduction to which work the following passage occurs: 'Prolepsis (Anticipation) exhibits the mystery of the metamorphosis of plants, by which the herb, which is the *larva* or imperfect condition, is changed into the declared fructification: for the plant is capable of producing either a leafy herb or a fructification. . . . When a tree produces a flower, nature anticipates the produce of five years where these come out all at once; forming of the bud leaves of the next year, *bracts;* of those of the following year, the *calyx;* of the following, the *corolla;* of the next, the *stamina;* of the subsequent, the *pistils*, filled with the granulated marrow of the seed, the terminus of the life of a vegetable.' . . . In the *Prolepsis* the speculative matter, which Linnæus himself carefully distinguishes as such, must be separated from the rest, and this may, I think, be done in most of the sections. He starts with explaining clearly and well the origin and position of buds, and their constant presence, whether developed or not, in the axils of the leaf: adding abundance of acute observations and experiments to prove his statements. The leaf he declares to be the first effort of the plant in spring: he proceeds to show, successively, that bracts, calyx, corolla, stamen, and pistils are each of them metamorphosed leaves."[1] Doctor Hooker adds, "There is nothing in all this that detracts from the merits of Goethe's rediscovery;" and there can be little doubt that, had not Goethe, or another, proved the doctrine, botanists would to this day have continued to pass over the passage in Linnæus as one of his "fanciful flights."

The *aperçu* was in Linnæus: a spark awaiting the

[1] Whewell: "Hist. of Ind. Sciences," 3d ed., iii. 553.

presence of some inflammable imagination; and when we remember how fond Goethe was of Linnæus, we can hardly suppose that this *aperçu* had not more than once flashed across his mind as a gleam of the truth. With regard to Caspar Friedrich Wolff the evidence is far from satisfactory. It is certain that Wolff, in his immortal work on "Generation," had clearly grasped the morphological principles, and had left Goethe very little to add to them. But it is very uncertain whether Goethe had ever read Wolff. Some years after the publication of his work he mentions with pride the fact of Wolff having been his "admirable precursor," and says that his attention to the work had been drawn by a namesake of the great embryologist. It was with no little surprise, therefore, that I read in Düntzer[1] the unhesitating assertion that in 1785 Herder had made Goethe a present of Wolff's "Theoria Generationis," which contained a rough outline of several of Goethe's favourite ideas. If this statement were correct, Goethe would be under serious suspicion; but it is not correct. On referring to the passage in Herder's letter to Knebel, which Düntzer pretends is the authority for this statement, I find, in the first place, that Herder does not specify the "Theoria Generationis," nor indeed can we be sure he refers to C. F. Wolff at all; he merely says "Wolff," which is a common name among German authors; in the second place, he does not say that he has *given* the book to Goethe, but that he *intends* doing so when he can get a copy; meanwhile Knebel is not to mention the book to Goethe. And out of such a sentence as this, Düntzer has constructed a "fact," which while it gives him the small delight of correcting in a foot-note Goethe's assertion that F. A. Wolff directed his attention to the "Theoria Generationis," lays Goethe open to the charges of having borrowed his morphology from

[1] "Goethe und Karl August," 1861, p. 212.

Wolff, of having concealed the fact, and of having pretended never to have seen his predecessor's work until his attention was directed to it some years afterward. Against such charges the following arguments may be urged. First, there is Goethe's own explicit statement — and his veracity is not lightly to be questioned. Secondly, if the work referred to by Herder was the "Theoria Generationis" (which is probable, but not certain), and if it was given as intended (also probable, but not certain), we have no evidence that Goethe read it. Thirdly, and conclusively, the date of the very letter in which Herder mentions his intention is ten years *later* (1795) than Düntzer would have us suppose; and is thus five years *after* the publication of Goethe's views (1790).[1]

The "Metamorphosen" was published in 1790. In 1817 Goethe says that he had requested his scientific friends to make notes of any passages they might meet in earlier writers relative to the topic he had treated, because he was convinced that there was nothing absolutely new. His friend F. A. Wolff directed him to Caspar Friedrich. In expressing his admiration for his great predecessor he is proud to acknowledge how much he had learned from him during five and twenty years. Now five and twenty years from 1817 brings us back to 1792 — that is to say, two years after the publication of the "Metamorphosen," and three years before the letter written by Herder.[2] So that if we assume the work in question to have been the "Theoria Gen-

[1] See Knebel: "Nachlass," ii. 268, which is the authority cited by Düntzer, whose inaccuracy is unpardonable in one so uniformly dull, and so merciless in ferreting out the small inaccuracies of others.

[2] It should be added that Knebel's editors place a (?) after the date 1795. But we have no reason to suppose they could err by *ten* years in assigning this letter its place; Düntzer professes no doubt as to the accuracy of the date; and internal evidence, taken with what is said above, renders it highly probable that 1795 is very little removed from the correct date.

erationis," Goethe was perfectly correct in mentioning F. A. Wolff, and not Herder, as the friend to whom he was first indebted for a knowledge of its existence.

The tone in which Goethe speaks of Caspar Friedrich Wolff is assuredly not that of a man who had any obligations to conceal; but of a man who, recognising a precursor with pleasure, speaks of the two theories as two independent modes of conceiving the phenomena, the theory of his precursor being preëminently physiological, while his own was preëminently morphological.

With regard both to Linnæus and Wolff it may be said that they anticipated the doctrine in relation to plants, but that to Goethe belongs the credit of establishing it. We do not take from the credit of Columbus by showing that, five centuries before he discovered the New World, Scandinavian voyagers had repeatedly touched on those shores; nor do we diminish the value of Goethe's contribution to Science, by showing that before him Wolff had perceived the identity of the various organs of the plant. It was not the purpose of the Scandinavians to discover the New World. They did not make their discovery a possession for mankind. Neither was it Wolff's purpose to create a new theory in Botany. He discovered a process of nature while he was seeking the laws of Epigenesis, and he only used his discovery as one of several illustrations. Columbus set out with the distinct purpose of discovery, and made his discovery a possession for all time. So also Goethe set out with the distinct purpose, and botanists justly declare that to his work they owe the idea of plant metamorphosis.

Goethe's work is very beautiful, and may be read without any previous botanical knowledge. It traces the metamorphoses of the grain into the leaf, and thence into the flower. The morphological part is perfect, except that, as Cohn remarks, he has given an exclusive predominance to the leaf, and overlooked the

not less important stem. It is to be regretted that he hampers himself with the following physiological hypothesis: every segment proceeding immediately from that which goes before it, receiving its nourishment through all the segments which have gone before, must, he says, be more perfect, and must send to its leaves and buds a more elaborate sap. The result is that the coarser fluids are rejected, the finer attracted, and the plant grows more and more perfect till it reaches its point of culmination.

This hypothesis of a more elaborated sap, reaching the ultimate segments, is in direct contradiction to the hypothesis of Wolff, which also declares the flower to be modified leaves; but how modified?[1] they are modified because they are imperfect. Their development has been arrested. They are smaller, have less sap, the sap has lost its chlorophyl, and the colour of the flower is an evidence of *imperfection*. I cannot stop to consider Wolff's ingenious arguments by which he endeavours to show that flowering and fructification are arrests of development. It is enough to indicate the contrast between his and Goethe's views. Both are agreed that, inasmuch as a differentiation does take place, it must have some cause; but the cause is by Wolff said to be deficiency of sap, by Goethe elaborated sap.

Goethe agrees with Wolff as regards the passage of the leaf into the flower being dependent on the acceleration or retardation of the sap. It had been noticed by Linnæus that a too abundant supply of food retards the flowering, and accelerates the growth of leaves; whereas a moderate supply, nay, even an approach to starvation, accelerates the flowering and diminishes the number of leaves. Wolff attributes this simply to the fact that so long as there is abundant nutriment there will be abundant growth, and no arrest in the shape of

[1] "Theorie von der Generation," §80, sq.

imperfect leaves (*i. e.* flowers); and when nutriment is scanty, the arrest soon takes place. But unfortunately for this opinion, and indeed for the opinion that flowers are imperfect leaves resulting from a want of nutriment, there is a class of plants which blossom *before* they put forth leaves. Goethe's explanation, hypothetical though it be, is better. He says that as long as there are any of the grosser fluids to be rejected, the organs of the plant are forced to employ themselves in this labour, which labour renders flowering impossible; but no sooner do we limit the nourishment than, by diminishing this process of elaboration, we accelerate the flowering.

We are here touching on the great law of antagonism between Growth and Development which is intimately connected with the law of Reproduction — a subject too vast to be even indicated in this rapid survey. The student will note, however, that although Goethe perils his position by the introduction of an hypothetical elaboration of fluids, without assigning a cause for that elaboration, he nevertheless sees, what many fail to see, that Reproduction is only another form of Growth — a process of differentiation. "The vital forces of the plant," he says, "manifest themselves in two ways: on the one hand *vegetation*, issuing in the stem and leaves; on the other *reproduction*, issuing in flowers and fruits. If we examine vegetation closely, we shall see that the plant continuing itself from articulation to articulation, from leaf to leaf, and putting forth buds, accomplishes a *reproduction* which differs from that ordinarily so named in being *successive* — it manifests itself in a series of isolated developments instead of manifesting itself *simultaneously*. That force which produces buds has the greatest analogy with that which determines simultaneously the higher act of propagation. We can force the plant to produce buds incessantly, or we can ac-

celerate the epoch of flowering; the first by abundant nourishment, the second by nourishment less abundant. In defining *budding* as 'successive propagation,' and *flowering* and *fructification* as 'simultaneous propagation,' we designate the mode in which each manifests itself. Thus, then, whether the plant buds, flowers, or fructifies, it is always by means of *the same organs*, the form and destination of which are changed. The same organ which expands into a leaf upon the stem, and presents such varied forms, contracts to make the calyx, expands again to make the petal, to contract once more into the sexual organs, and expand for the last time into fruit."

Whatever may be the final decision upon the Metamorphoses of Plants, there must ever remain the great and unique glory of a poet having created a new branch of science, and by means as legitimately scientific as those of any other creation. Morphology now counts among its students illustrious names, and crowds of workers. And the leading idea of this science we owe to the author of "Faust." Nor is this all. He has priority in some of the most luminous and comprehensive ideas which are now guiding philosophic speculation on the science of life. In the historical sketch which Carus prefixes to his "Transcendental Anatomy," after setting forth the various tentatives men had made to discover by means of *descriptive* anatomy, and occasional comparisons, the true relations of the various parts of the body, he says:[1] "If we go back as far as possible into the history of the labours undertaken with a view to arrive at the philosophic conception of the skeleton, we find that the first idea of a metamorphosis of the osseous forms — *i. e.* that all forms are but modifications more or less traceable of one and the same Type — belongs to Goethe." After a quotation of Goethe's words, Carus adds: "It is difficult to express

[1] "Anatomie Comparée," vol. iii. p. 3. French trans.

in clearer terms the idea of the Unity which rules over the plurality of the skeleton-forms. Its first great application was the vertebral theory of the skull."

Let me repeat, as a matter of justice, and not to allow the high praise bestowed on Goethe's efforts to mislead the reader's expectation, that the merit is that of a *thinker in science*, not the merit of an industrious discoverer and collector of details. I do not mean that he was not an industrious observer; his eye and interest were ever open and alert to all natural phenomena, and his mind was ever seeking to reduce observations to law. The wide sweep of his interest is shown by his correspondence with the leaders in Science. There are in the published correspondence, letters to and from Purkinje, Joh. Müller, Brück, on *Physiology:* D'Alton, Blumenbach, Sömmering, Carus, Hensinger, Loder, and Weber, on *Anatomy:* Beneke, Heinroth, Jacobi, Nasse, and Stiedenroth, on *Anthropology:* Gruithuisen, on *Astronomy:* Bluff, Gmelin, Henschel, Hess, Martius, Meyer, Nees von Esenbeck, Schelver, Schulz, Treviranus, Voigt, Wilbrand, on *Botany:* Döbereiner and Wurzer, on *Chemistry:* Bischof, Branter, Dittmar, Schrön, Hufeland, Müller, Poggendorf, and Posselt, on *Meteorology:* Bedemar, Berzelius, Cramer, Lewy, Leonhard, Naumann, and many others, on *Meteorology* and *Geology:* Göschel, Henning, Kämtz, Marx, Roux, Schultz, Schweigger, Seebeck, Werneburg, on *Optics;* and Yelin, on *Physics.* But with all this interest and alertness he wanted the steady patience of research even in the subjects which most attracted him. He was an observer and a thinker, rather than an investigator according to the strict procedures of science. His great effort was to create a Method, to establish principles upon which the science could be founded. In an admirable little essay on "Experiment as the Mediator between the Object and the Subject," written in 1793, we see how clear

were his ideas on Method. "Man," he says, "regards at first all external objects with reference to himself; and rightly so, for his whole fate depends on them, on the pleasure or pain which they cause him, on their utility or danger to him." This is the initial stage of all speculation. Its method is the determination of the external order according to *analogies drawn from within.* The culmination of this Method is seen in the fundamental axiom of Des Cartes and Spinoza: *all clear ideas are true.* So long as this Method is followed, Metaphysics reigns triumphant, and Science is impossible. It is displaced by the Objective Method. Goethe remarks how much more difficult is the task of discerning objects according to this Method, *i. e.* not as related to *us*, but as related to one another. Our touchstone of pleasure or pain is given up. With godlike indifference we become *spectators*, and seek that which *is*, not that which touches *us.* Thus the real botanist considers less the beauty or the use of flowers, than their laws of growth and their relation to each other. And as the sun shines on them, developing them all impartially, so must the philosopher look on them with calm, contemplative eye, taking the terms of his comparison from the circle he contemplates, not from any figments of his own mind. Goethe sets aside all inquiry into final causes, — by Bacon justly styled "barren virgins," — and seeks to know what *is.*

It is worthy of remark that the study of Development is quite a modern study. Formerly men were content with the full-statured animal, — the perfected art, — the completed society. The phases of development and the laws of growth were disregarded, or touched on in a vague, uncertain manner. A change has come over the spirit of inquiry. "The history of Development," says Von Baer, "is the true torchbearer in every inquiry into organic bodies." In Geology, in Physiology, in History, and in Art, we are now all bent

on tracing the phases of development. To understand the *grown* we try to follow the *growth*.

As a thinker in science Goethe was truly remarkable, and as a worker not contemptible. To prove how far he was in advance of his age we have only to cite a single passage which, in its aphoristic, pregnant style, contains the clear announcement of biological laws which have since been named among the glories of Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Von Baer, Milne-Edwards, Cuvier, and Lamarck.

"Every living being is not a unity, but a plurality. Even when it appears as an individual, it is the reunion of beings living and existing in themselves, identical in origin, but which may appear identical or similar, different or dissimilar.

"The *more imperfect* a being is the more do its individual parts *resemble each other*, and the more do these parts *resemble the whole*. The *more perfect* the being is the more *dissimilar are its parts*. In the former case the parts are more or less a repetition of the whole; in the latter case they are totally unlike the whole.

"The more the parts resemble each other, the less subordination is there of one to the other. *Subordination of parts indicates high grade of organisation.*"[1]

To illustrate by familiar examples. Take a polyp and cut it into several pieces; each piece will live and manifest those phenomena of nutrition and sensibility which the whole polyp manifested. Turn it inside out like a glove, the internal part becomes its skin, the external part becomes its stomach. The reason is, that in the simple structure of the polyp, the parts resemble each other and resemble the whole. There is no individual organ, or apparatus of organs, performing one function, such as nutrition, and nothing else. Every

[1] "Zur Morphologie," 1807 (written in 1795), "Werke," xxxvi. p. 7.

function is performed by every part; just as in savage societies, every man is his own tailor, his own armourer, his own cook, and his own policeman. But take an animal higher in the scale, and there you find the structure composed of dissimilar parts, and each part having a different office. That animal cannot be hewn in pieces and each piece continue to live as before. That animal cannot have its skin suddenly turned into a stomach. That animal, in the social body, cannot make his own clothes or his own musket; the division of labour which has accompanied his higher condition has robbed him of his universal dexterity.

The law invoked by Goethe is now to be met with in every philosophic work on zoology. One form of it is known in England as Von Baer's law, viz., that Development proceeds from the Like to the Unlike, from the General to the Particular, from the Homogeneous to the Heterogeneous. I have too profound an admiration for Von Baer to wish in any way to diminish his splendid claims, but I cannot help remarking that when writers attribute to him the merit of having discovered this law, they are in direct contradiction with Von Baer himself, who not only makes no such claim, but in giving the formula adds, "This law of development has indeed never been overlooked."[1] His merit is the splendid application and demonstration of the law, not the first perception of it.

It is generally known that the law of "division of labour in the animal organism" is claimed by Milne-Edwards, the great French zoologist, as a discovery of

[1] "Dieses Gesetz der Ausbildung ist wohl nie verkannt worden." ("Zur Entwickelungsgeschichte." Erster Theil, p. 153.) Among others, Wolff has clearly stated it. ("Theorie von der Generation, § 28, p. 163.) See also Meckel, "Traité d' Anatomie Comparée." French trans., i. 297. Buffon also says: "Un corps organisé dont toutes les parties seraient semblables à lui-même est la plus simple, car ce n'est que la répétition de la même forme." ("Hist. Nat.," 1749, ii. 47.)

his own. Yet we see how clearly it is expressed in Goethe's formula. And with even more clearness do we see expressed Cuvier's principle of classification, viz., the *subordination of parts.* I do not wish to press this point further, nor do I wish that these great men should be robbed of any merit in order to glorify Goethe with their trophies. The student of history knows how discoveries are, properly speaking, made by the Age, and not by men. He knows that all discoveries have had their anticipations; and that the world justly credits the man who makes the discovery *available*, not the man who simply perceived that it was possible. I am not here writing the history of science, but the biography of Goethe; and the purpose of these citations is to show that he placed himself at the highest point of view possible to his age, and that as a thinker he thought the thoughts which the greatest men have subsequently made popular.

Observe, moreover, that Goethe's anticipation is not of that slight and fallacious order which, like so many other anticipations, rests upon a vague or incidental phrase. He did not simply attain an *aperçu* of the truth. He mastered the law, and his mastery of that law sprang from his mastery of the whole series of conceptions in which it finds its place. Thus in his "Introduction to Comparative Anatomy," written in 1795, he pointed out the essentially sterile nature of the comparisons then made, not only in respect of comparing animals with men and with each other, not only in the abuse of final causes, but also in taking man as the standard instead of commencing with the simplest organisms and rising gradually upwards. One year after this, Geoffroy St. Hilaire, ignorant of what was passing in the study of Weimar, and in the Museum at Jena, published his "Dissertation sur les Makis," wherein he began his renovation of the science. He, too, like Goethe, was bent on the creation of a

Type according to which all organised structures could be explained. This conception of a Type (*allgemeines Bild*), according to which the whole animal kingdom may be said to be constructed, was a truly scientific conception and has borne noble fruit. It must not, however, be confounded with a Platonic Idea. It was no metaphysical entity, it was simply a scientific artifice. Goethe expressly says that we are not for an instant to believe in the *existence* of this Type as an objective reality, although it is the generalised expression of that which really exists. This caution has not been sufficiently present to the minds of several speculators; and the idea of a Type has engendered not a few extravagances. Nevertheless, the net result of these speculations has been good.

One of the most interesting applications of the idea of a Type is the theory of the vertebral structure of the skull. Every cultivated reader knows that transcendental anatomists have conceived the skull is composed of three, or more, vertebræ variously modified; but very few readers have a distinct conception of what parts of the skull are separable into vertebræ, or what is the amount of resemblance now traceable underneath the modifications; and this is the less to be wondered at, seeing that even now there is no great unanimity among independent investigators. The principles of Morphology are not always sufficiently attended to. Just as in considering the Metamorphoses of Plants we had to dismiss the idea of the pistil or stamen having been modified from a leaf, so must we dismiss the idea of a skull having been modified from a vertebral column. In both cases we may express the morphological identity — the unity of composition — by considering every organ in the plant as a modification of the typical leaf, and every bone in the skeleton as a modification of the typical vertebra (or part of a vertebra); but it is as inaccurate and misleading to call

the skull a vertebral column, as it would be to call the brain a spinal cord. Between the brain and cord there is a fundamental identity: both are masses of ganglionic substance, having (as I have elsewhere shown [1]) identical properties and similar, though not the same, functions. But over and above these fundamental resemblances there are manifest and important differences. To disregard differences, and fix attention solely on the resemblances, is eminently unphilosophical; and we can only be justified in saying that the structure of the skull is on the same *general plan* as the structure of the rest of the spinal axis, precisely as we say that the structure of the fish exhibits the same general plan as the structure of the quadruped. In other words, every special vertebra is the *individual* form of a *general* type. The skull is not, as Oken maintains, a modified spinal column.[2] To maintain this is to say that the spinal vertebra is the typical form from which the cranial vertebræ are developed; whereas, in truth, both are but variations of one typical form: and the idea of Kielmeyer that the spinal column is a skull, is quite as accurate as the idea of Oken that the skull is a spinal column. Indeed, Kielmeyer's idea is the more admissible of the two; for if we seek our evidence in embryology, or in that "permanent embryology" the Animal Series, we find the cranial bones are *first* in order of time: in fishes the skull alone presents true osseous development of all the segments of the typical bone; and if we go still lower in the series, we find — in the Cephalopoda — a rudimentary brain, not unlike the lower forms of the brain in fishes, enclosed in a rudimentary skull, but without a spinal cord or spinal column. We are justified, therefore, in

[1] "Reports of the British Association for the Advancement of Science," 1859, and "Physiology of Common Life," vol. ii.

[2] "As the brain is a more voluminously developed spinal cord, so is the brain-case a more voluminous spinal column." Oken cited by Owen. ("Homologies," p. 74.)

saying that the skull cannot be a modification of the spinal column.

Oken and Spix regard the head as a "repetition" of the trunk; the brain is a repetition of the spinal cord; the mouth repeats the intestine and abdomen; the nose repeats the lungs and thorax; the jaws the limbs. Unfortunately for this ingenious scheme, there are vertebrate animals with heads but without limbs; and it would therefore be nearer the mark to call the limbs modified jaws, than to call jaws modified limbs. In presence of such perplexities, we cannot wonder if some men have objected to the vertebral theory, that it amounts to nothing more than saying a vertebra is a bone.

The typical vertebra is thus defined by Owen: "One of those segments of the endoskeleton which constitutes the axis of the body and the protecting canals of the nervous and vascular trunks."[1] A perfect vertebra should therefore contain at least two arches, one to form the protecting walls of a nervous centre, the other to form the protecting walls of the great blood-vessels. Now if we make a section of the skull, we find that this bony box "consists of a strong central mass whence spring an upper arch and a lower arch. The upper arch is formed by the walls of the cavity containing the brain, and stands in the same relation to it as does the neural arch of a vertebra to the spinal cord with which that brain is continuous. The lower arch encloses the other viscera of the head, in the same way as the ribs embrace those of the thorax. And not only is the general analogy between the two manifest, but a young skull may readily be separated into a number of segments, in each of which it requires but little imagination to trace a sort of family likeness to such an expanded vertebra as the atlas."[2]

[1] Owen: "Homologies," p. 81.
[2] Huxley: "Croonian Lecture," 1858.

The luminous guide of anatomical research, by Geoffroy St. Hilaire named "le principe des connexions," will thus easily lead us to recognise the neural arches of the brain-case as homologues of the neural arches of the spinal axis, and we may ask with Huxley, "What can be more natural than to take another step to conceive the skull as a portion of the vertebral column still more altered than the sacrum or coccyx, whose vertebræ are modified in correspondence with the expansion of the anterior end of the nervous centre and the needs of the cephalic end of the body?" This was the question which flashed upon the poet's mind, and which indeed is so intimately allied to the morphological doctrines he had already found realised in plants, that far from estimating it as a discovery which reflects singular honour on his sagacity, I am disposed to think more lightly of it than of many a neglected sentence in his little studied essays. I say this, not because the idea seems obvious now it has been stated, and every one can make the egg stand on end after Columbus; but because in Goethe's attempt to carry his idea into anatomical detail it is universally confessed that he was not successful. This is a point to which we shall presently return. Meanwhile I may add that, on reëxamination of this complex subject, I am of opinion that neither Goethe nor Oken has been free from a certain indistinctness of conception, or has sufficiently kept before him all the elements of the problem. A fundamental mistake, already touched upon, is in the supposed relation of the skull to the spinal axis. Anatomists would scarcely venture to affirm that the brain bears the same relation to the cervical enlargement of the spinal cord, as that enlargement bears to the lumbar enlargement of the cord; yet they affirm, explicitly and implicitly, that the brain-case bears the same relation to the cervical vertebræ as those vertebræ bear to the lumbar. Whereas anat-

omy very plainly teaches that, over and above certain fundamental resemblances between the brain and spinal cord, there are also manifest and important differences, very early exhibited in the course of embryological development, and bringing with them corresponding differences in the protecting bones. And in this point of view the researches of embryologists, as expounded in Huxley's remarkable Croonian Lecture, seem decisive. I will cite here the conclusion to which Huxley is led: "The fallacy involved in the vertebral theory of the skull," he says, "is like that which before Von Baer infested our notions of the relations between fishes and mammals. The mammal was imagined to be a modified fish, whereas, in truth, both fish and mammal start from a common point, and each follows its own road thence. So I conceive what the facts teach us is this: — the spinal column and the skull start from the same primitive condition — a common central plate with its laminæ dorsales and ventrales — whence they immediately begin to diverge. The spinal column, in all cases, becomes segmented into its somatomes; and in the great majority of cases distinct centra and intercentra are developed, enclosing the notocord more or less completely. The cranium never becomes segmented into somatomes; distinct centra and intercentra, like those of the spinal column, are never developed in it. Much of the basis cranii lies beyond the notocord. In the process of ossification there is a certain analogy between the spinal column and the cranium, but the analogy becomes weaker as we proceed toward the anterior end of the skull."

Although Huxley insists perhaps too much upon the *differences*, in his impatience at the too great emphasis which has been laid on the *resemblances*, his criticism seems to me conclusive against the vertebral theory as generally understood. It is certainly extending the principles of transcendental anatomy to a hazardous

limit when the brain is regarded as a "repetition" of any segments of the spinal cord. The differences between the two are more than differences of volume and shape. In the one the gray matter is inside; in the other it is outside. From the one sensory and motor nerves, symmetrically in pairs, are given off to supply the skin and muscles; in the other the sensory and motor nerves are not only distributed in a very different manner — the optic, olfactory, and acoustic having no corresponding motor nerves — but they are limited to ganglia at the base and in the medulla oblongata: the two most voluminous and important parts of the brain (the cerebrum and cerebellum) having *no* nerves whatever. In the presence of such wide diversities as these, not to mention others, it is surely an abuse of language when Oken calls the brain a more voluminously developed spinal cord, and deduces thence that the brain-case is only a repetition of the spinal column.

Having thus endeavoured to convey some idea of the famous vertebral theory of the skull, I have now to consider a somewhat angrily debated question, affecting Goethe's character more than his intellectual pretensions, namely, the charge of mendacious vanity brought against him by Oken, and, I am sorry to say, very inconsiderately countenanced by Professor Owen,[1] in respect to priority in the discovery.

Fifteen years after Goethe had passed away from this world, and when therefore there was no power of reply, Oken in the *Isis* (1847, *Heft* vii.) made his charge. His statement completely staggered me, suggesting very painful feelings as to Goethe's conduct. Indeed, the similarity in the stories of both suggests suspicion. Goethe says that during one of his rambles in the Jewish cemetery near Venice, he noticed the skull

[1] Art. Oken in "Encyclopædia Britannica," 8th edit.

of a ram, which had been cut longitudinally, and on examining it, the idea occurred to him that the face was composed of three vertebræ: "the transition from the anterior sphenoid to the ethmoid was evident at once." Now, compare Oken's story. He narrates how in 1802, in a work on the Senses, he had represented these organs as repetitions of lower organs, although he had not then grasped the idea, which lay so close at hand, respecting the skull as a repetition of the spinal column. In 1803 he identified the jaws of insects as limbs of the head; and in 1806, while rambling in the Hartz mountains, he picked up the skull of a deer: on examining it, he exclaimed, "That is a vertebral column!" Virchow admits that the coincidence in the stories is singular, but adds that the discovery is just as probable in the one case as in the other; all that is proved by the coincidence being that both minds were on the verge of the discovery. Goethe, by long physiognomical and osteological studies, was prepared for the idea; and was naturally led from the Metamorphoses of Plants to those of Insects: and if Oken reversed this order, passing from insects to mammals, he was, nevertheless, many years later than Goethe, as dates unequivocally prove. It is important to bear in mind that the vertebral theory is only another application of those morphological doctrines which Goethe had developed and applied to plants; and although it is quite *possible* that he might have held these views without making the special application to the skull; yet we know as a fact that he at once saw how the morphological laws must necessarily apply to animals, since he expressly states this in announcing his discovery to Herder.[1] Nay, he shortly afterward wrote, "In Natural History I shall bring you what you little expect. I believe myself to be very near the law of organisation." Still it may be

[1] "Italiänische Reise," ii. p. 5.

objected, this is no proof; it only shows that Goethe applied his doctrines to the animal organisation, not that he made a special application to the skull. Even this doubt, however, has been finally settled by the recently published correspondence, which gives us a letter from Goethe to Herder's wife, dated 4th May, 1790, from Venice: "Through a singular and lucky accident I have been enabled to take a step forwards in my explanation of the animal development (*Thierbildung*). My servant, in jest, took up the fragment of an animal's skull from the Jewish cemetery, pretending to offer it to me as a Jew's skull." Now when we remember that Goethe in after years affirmed that it was in 1790, and in the Jewish cemetery at Venice, that the idea of the vertebral structure of the skull flashed upon him, the evidence of this letter is conclusive.

Oken declares he made his discovery in 1806, and that in 1807 he wrote his Academic Programme. He was then a *Privat-Docent* in Göttingen, "at a time, therefore, when Goethe certainly knew nothing of my existence." He sent his dissertation to Jena, where he had just been appointed professor. Of that university Goethe was curator. Oken considers this fact decisive: namely, that Goethe would assuredly have remonstrated against Oken's claim to the discovery had he not recognised its justice. The fact, however, is by no means decisive: we shall see presently that Goethe had his own reasons for silence. "I naturally sent Goethe a copy of my programme. This discovery pleased him so much that he invited me, at Easter, 1808, to spend a week with him at Weimar, which I did. As long as the discovery was ridiculed by men of science Goethe was silent, but no sooner did it attain renown through the works of Meckel, Spix, and others, than there grew up a murmur among Goethe's servile admirers that this idea originated with him. About this time Boja-

nus went to Weimar, and hearing of Goethe's discovery, half believed it, and sent the rumour to me, which I thoughtlessly printed in the *Isis* (1818, p. 509); whereupon I announced that I made my discovery in the autumn of 1806." This is equivocal. He did *not* throw any doubt on Goethe's claim to priority, he only asserted his own originality. "Now that Bojanus had brought the subject forward," he adds, "Goethe's vanity was piqued, and he came afterward, thirteen years subsequent to my discovery, and said he had held the opinion for thirty years."

Why was Goethe silent when Oken first announced his discovery? and why did not Oken make the charge of plagiarism during Goethe's lifetime? The first question may be answered from Goethe's own works. In a note entitled "Das Schädelgerüst aus sechs Wirbelknochen auferbaut," after alluding to his recognition first of three and subsequently of six vertebræ in the skull, which he spoke of among his friends, who set to work to demonstrate it if possible, he says: "In the year 1807 this theory appeared tumultuously and imperfectly before the public, and naturally awakened great disputes and some applause. How seriously it was damaged by the incomplete and fantastic method of exposition, History must relate." This criticism of the exposition will be understood by every one who has read Oken, and who knows Goethe's antipathy to metaphysics.[1] With all his prepossession in favour of a Type, he could not patiently have accepted an exposition which "tumultuously" announced that "the whole man is but a vertebra." Accordingly he took no notice of the tumultuous metaphysician; and in his "Tag- und Jahres-Hefte" he mentions that while he was working out his theory with two friends, Riemer and Voigt, they brought him, with some surprise, the news

[1] So also Cuvier's antipathy to this exposition made him blind to the truth which it contained.

that this idea had just been laid before the public in an academic programme, "a fact," he adds, "*which they, being still alive, can testify.*" Why did he not claim priority? "I told my friends to keep quiet, for the idea was not properly worked out in the programme; and that it was not elaborated from original observations would be plain to all scientific men. I was frequently besought to speak plainly on the subject; but I was firm in my silence."

When I first discussed this question, and knew nothing of the decisive evidence which lay unpublished in the letter to Herder's wife, I said that this statement carried complete conviction to my mind. It was published many years before Oken made his charge, and it accused him in the most explicit terms of having prematurely disclosed an idea Goethe was then elaborating with the assistance of his friends. Nor was this all. It appealed to two honourable and respected men, then living, as witnesses of the truth. Oken said nothing when the question could have been peremptorily settled by calling upon Voigt and Riemer. He waited till death rendered an appeal impossible. He says, indeed, that he made no answer to the first passage I have cited, because he was not *named* in it, and he "did not wish to involve himself in a host of disagreeables." But this is no answer to the *second* passage. There he is named as plainly as if the name of Oken were printed in full; and not only is he named, but Goethe's friends speak of Oken's coming forward with Goethe's idea as a matter which "surprised" them. Those to whom this reasoning was not conclusive are now referred to the confirmation it receives from the letter to Herder's wife.

Having vindicated Goethe's character, and shown that *biographically* we are fully justified in assigning to him the honour of having first conceived this theory, it now remains to be added that *historically* the prior-

ity of Oken's claim must be admitted. In writing the poet's biography, it is of some importance to show that he was not indebted to Oken for the discovery. In writing the history of science, it would be to Oken that priority would be assigned, simply because, according to the judicious principles of historical appreciation, priority of publication carries off the prize. No man's claim to priority is acknowledged unless he can bring forward the evidence of publication; otherwise every discovery might be claimed by those who have no right to it. Moreover, Oken has another claim: to him undeniably belongs the merit of having introduced the idea into the scientific world, accompanied with sufficient amount of detail to make it acceptable to scientific minds, and to set them to work in verifying the idea. On these grounds I think it indisputable that the vertebral theory must be attributed to Oken, and not to Goethe; although it is not less indisputable that Goethe did anticipate the discovery by sixteen years, and would have earned the right to claim it of History, had he made his discovery public, instead of privately discussing it with his friends. Virchow thinks otherwise; he assigns priority to Goethe; but he would, I am sure, admit the generally received principle that priority of publication is the test upon which alone History can rely.

To conclude this somewhat lengthy chapter on the scientific studies, it must be stated that, for the sake of bringing together his various efforts into a manageable whole, I have not attended strictly to chronology. Nor have I specified the various separate essays he has written. They are all to be found collected in his works. My main object has been to show what were the directions of his mind; what were his achievements and failures in Science; what place Science filled in his life, and how false the supposition is that he was a mere dabbler.

What Buffon says of Pliny may truly be said of Goethe, that he had *cette facilité de penser en grand qui multiplie la science;* and it is only as a thinker in this great department that I claim a high place for him.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAMPAIGN IN FRANCE.

WE now return to the narrative, some points of which have been anticipated in the preceding chapter. In 1790 Goethe undertook the government of all the Institutions for Science and Art, and busied himself with the arrangement of the Museums and Botanical Gardens at Jena. In March of the same year he went once more to Italy to meet the Duchess Amalia and Herder in Venice. There he tried in Science to find refuge from troubled thoughts. Italy on a second visit seemed, however, quite another place to him. He began to suspect there had been considerable illusion in the charm of his first visit. The "Venetian Epigrams," if compared with the "Roman Elegies," will indicate the difference of his mood. The yearning regret, the fulness of delight, the newness of wonder which give their accents to the Elegies, are replaced by sarcasms and the bitterness of disappointment. It is true that many of these epigrams were written subsequently, as their contents prove, but the mass of them are products of the Venetian visit. Something of this dissatisfaction must be attributed to his position. He was ill at ease with the world. The troubles of the time, and the troubles of his own domestic affairs, aggravated the dangers which then threatened his aims of self-culture, and increased his difficulty in finding that path in Science and Art whereon the culture of the world might be pursued.

In June he returned to Weimar. In July the duke sent for him at the Prussian Camp in Silesia, "where, instead of stones and flowers, he would see the field sown with troops." He went unwillingly, but compensated himself by active researches into "stones and flowers," leaving to the duke and others such interest as was to be found in soldiers. He lived like a hermit in the camp, and began to write an essay on the development of animals, and a comic opera.

In August they returned. The Duchess Amalia and Herder, impatient at "such waste of time over old bones," plagued him into relinquishing osteology, and urged him to complete "Wilhelm Meister." He did not, however, proceed far with it. The creative impulse was past; and to disprove Newton was a more imperious desire. In 1791, which was a year of quiet study and domestic happiness for him, the Court Theatre was established. He undertook the direction with delight. In a future chapter we shall follow his efforts to create a national stage, and by bringing them before the eye in one continuous series save the tedious repetition of isolated details. In July the Duchess Amalia founded her Friday Evenings. At her palace, between the hours of five and eight, the duke, the Duchess Luise, Goethe and his circle, with a few favoured friends from the court, assembled to hear some one of the members read a composition of his own. No sort of etiquette was maintained. Each member, on entering, sat down where he pleased. Only for the Reader was a distinct place allotted. One night Goethe read them the genealogy of Cagliostro, which he had brought from Italy; another night he gave them a lecture on Colours; Herder lectured on Immortality; Bertuch on Chinese Colours and English Gardens; Böttiger on the Vases of the Ancients; Hufeland on his favourite theme of Longevity; and Bode read fragments of his translation of Montaigne. When the reading was over, they all

approached a large table in the middle of the room, on which lay some engravings or some novelty of interest, and friendly discussion began. The absence of etiquette made these reunions delightful.

The mention of Cagliostro in the preceding paragraph recalls Goethe's comedy, "Der Gross-Kophta," in which he dramatised the story of the Diamond Necklace. It had originally been arranged as an opera; Reichardt was to have composed the music; and if the reader happens to have waded through this dull comedy, he will regret that it was not made an opera, or anything else except what it is. One is really distressed to find such productions among the writings of so great a genius, and exasperated to find critics lavish in their praise of a work which their supersubtle ingenuity cannot rescue from universal neglect. I will not occupy space with an analysis of it.

And now he was to be torn from his quiet studies to follow the fortunes of an unquiet camp. The King of Prussia and the Duke of Brunswick at the head of a large army invaded France, to restore Louis XVI. to his throne, and save legitimacy from the sacrilegious hands of Sansculottism. France, it was said, groaned under the tyranny of factions, and yearned for deliverance. The emigrants made it clear as day that the allies would be welcomed by the whole nation; and the German rulers willingly lent their arms to the support of legitimacy. Karl August, passionately fond of the army, received the command of a Prussian regiment. And Goethe, passionately fond of Karl August, followed him into the field. But he followed the duke, — he had no sympathy with the cause. Indeed, he had no strong feeling either way. Legitimacy was no passion with him; still less was Republicanism. Without interest in passing politics, profoundly convinced that all salvation could only come through inward culture, and dreading disturbances mainly because they

rendered culture impossible, he was emphatically the "Child of Peace," and could at no period of his life be brought to sympathise with great struggles. He disliked the Revolution as he disliked the Reformation, because they both thwarted the peaceful progress of development:

"Franzthum drängt in diesen verworrenen Tagen wie ehmals Lutherthum es gethan, ruhige Bildung zurück."

That philosophers and patriots should thunder against such a doctrine, refute its arguments, and proclaim its dangers, is reasonable enough; but how strangely unreasonable in philosophers and patriots to thunder against Goethe, because he, holding this doctrine, wrote and acted in its spirit! We do not need this example to teach us how men transfer their hatred of opinions to the holders of the hated opinions, otherwise we might wonder at the insensate howl which has been raised against the greatest glory of the German name, because he did not share the opinions of the howlers; opinions, too, which they for the most part would not have held, had they not been instructed by the events which have since given approbation to what *then* seemed madness.

It was not in Goethe's nature to be much moved by events, to be deeply interested in the passing troubles of external life. A meditative mind like his naturally sought in the eternal principles of Nature the stimulus and the food, which other minds sought in passing events of the day. A poet and a philosopher is bound to be interested in the great questions of poetry and philosophy; but to rail at him for not also taking part in politics, is as irrational as to rail at a Prime Minister because he cares not two pins for Greek Art, and has no views on the transmutation of species. It is said, and very foolishly said, that Goethe turned from politics to art and science because politics disturbed him,

and because he was too *selfish* to interest himself in the affairs of others. But this accusation is on a par with those ungenerous accusations which declare heterodoxy to be the shield of profligacy: as if doubts proceeded only from dissolute habits. How unselfish Goethe was, those best know who know him best; it would be well if we could say so much of many who devote themselves to patriotic schemes. Patriotism may be quite as selfish as Science or Art, even when it is a devout conviction; nor is it likely to be less selfish when, as so often happens, patriotism is only an uneasy pauperism.

That Goethe sincerely desired the good of mankind, and that he laboured for it in his way with a perseverance few have equalled, is surely enough to absolve him from the charge of selfishness because his labours did not take the special direction of politics. What his opinions were is one thing, another thing his conduct. Jean Paul says, "He was more far-sighted than the rest of the world, for in the beginning of the French Revolution he despised the patriots as much as he did at the end." I do not detect any feeling so deep as contempt, either late or early; but it is certain that while Klopstock and others were madly enthusiastic at the opening of this terrible drama, they were as madly fanatical against it before its close; whereas Goethe seems to have held pretty much the same opinion throughout.

There were three principles promulgated by the Republicans, which to him were profound absurdities. The first was the doctrine of equality; not simply of equality in the eye of the law (that he accepted), but of absolute equality. His study of Nature, no less than his study of men, led him, as it could not but lead him, to the conviction that each Individual is perfect in itself, and in so far equals the highest; but that no one Individual is exactly like another.

"Gleich sei keiner dem Andern; doch gleich sei Jeder dem Höchsten.
Wie das zu machen? es sei Jeder vollendet in sich."

The second revolutionary principle was the doctrine of government by the people. He believed in no such governmental power. Even when you kill the king, he says, you do not know how to rule in his place.

"Sie gönnten Cäsar'n das Reich nicht,
Und wussten's nicht zu regieren."

He pointed to the fate of France "as a lesson both to governors and the governed, but more even for the latter than the former. The rulers were destroyed, but who was there to protect the Many *against* the Many? The Mob became the Tyrant."

"Frankreichs traurig Geschick, die Grossen mögen's bedenken;
Aber bedenken fürwahr sollen es Kleine noch mehr.
Grosse gingen zu Grunde: doch wer beschützte die Menge
Gegen die Menge? Da war Menge der Menge Tyrann."

What wonder then if he felt repulsion to all the "Apostles of Freedom," when on close scrutiny he found they all sought nothing but license?

"Alle Freiheits-Apostel, sie waren mir immer zuwider,
Willkür suchte doch nur Jeder am Ende für sich."

The third revolutionary principle was, that political freedom is necessary to man. In the early days of authorship he had already spoken his conviction that such freedom was by no means necessary. In "Egmont" it reappears; and through life we find him insisting on the fact that no man *can* be free; the only freedom necessary is that which enables each to go about his business in security; to rear house and children, to move unconstrained in his small circle. It does not seem to occur to him that even this free-

dom is impossible without political freedom. It does not occur to him that police regulations affect the individual, and governmental regulations affect the nation.[1]

But while he was thus fundamentally opposed to the principles of the Revolution, and the government of the Many, it is equally clear that he had no sympathy with the Royalists; that he absolved neither their policy nor their acts. The madness of the Terrorists was to him no excuse for the duplicity of the Royalists. "No, you are not right. No, you must not deceive the Mob, because the Mob is wild and foolish. Wild and foolish are all Mobs which have been duped. Be only *upright* with them, and you will gradually train them to be men."

"Sage, thun wir nicht recht? Wir müssen den Pöbel betrügen.
Sieh' nur, wie ungeschickt, sieh' nur, wie wild er sich zeigt! —
Ungeschickt und wild sind alle rohen Betrognen;
Seid nur *redlich*, und so führt ihn zum Menschlichen an."

Nor was all the wild oratory so irrational in his eyes as the Royalists proclaimed it. "These street orators seem to me also mad; but a madman will speak wisdom in freedom, when in slavery wisdom is dumb."

"Mir auch scheinen sie toll; doch redet ein Toller
Weise Sprüche, wenn, ach! Weisheit im Sclaven verstummt."

To Eckermann he said: "A revolution is always the fault of the government, never of the people."

I might extend these remarks by showing how such political principles naturally grew up in the course of

[1] He was of Doctor Johnson's opinion: "Sir, I would not give a guinea to live under one form of government rather than another. It is of no moment to the happiness of an individual. Sir, the danger of the abuse of power is nothing to a private man. What Frenchman is prevented from passing his life as he pleases?" Boswell, chap. xxvi. No one thinks this opinion a proof of Johnson's heartless egoism.

his education, and how he, in the forty-third year of his age, was not likely to become an apostle of Freedom, or to become deeply interested in political disturbances, especially at this period, when he had completely emerged from the rebellious strivings of his youth, and had settled the aims of manhood. But enough has been said to show what his position truly was; and the reader who will not accept it with that impartiality which it claims, will certainly not accept it more readily because he is told its origin and growth. The American who despises the negro because he is black will not despise him less on learning that the blackness is nothing but a peculiar modification of the pigment in the skin.

Goethe has himself written a diary of the "Campaign in France,"[1] and if I had any belief in the reader's following the advice, I would advise him to read that work, and save some pages of this volume. In well-grounded suspicion that he will do nothing of the kind, I select a few details of interest, and string them on a thread of narrative.

The Allies entered France, believing the campaign would be a mere promenade. Longwy, they were assured, would soon surrender; and the people receive them with open arms. Longwy did surrender; but the people, so far from showing any disposition to welcome them, everywhere manifested the most determined resistance. The following passage will let us pretty clearly into the secret of Goethe's views. "Thus did the Prussians, Austrians, and a portion of the French, come to carry on their warlike operations on the French soil. By whose power and authority did they this? They might have done it in their own name. War had been partly declared against them — their league was no secret; but another pretext was

[1] It has been translated by Mr. Robert Farie. The extracts which follow are from this translation.

invented. They took the field in the name of Louis XVI.: they exacted nothing, but they borrowed compulsorily. *Bons* had been printed, which the commander signed; but whoever had them in his possession filled them up at his pleasure, according to circumstances, and Louis XVI. was to pay. Perhaps, after the manifesto, nothing had so much exasperated the people against the monarchy as did this treatment. I was myself present at a scene which I remember as a most tragic one. Several shepherds, who had succeeded in uniting their flocks, in order to conceal them for safety in the forests or other retired places, being seized by some active patrols and brought to the army, were at first well received and kindly treated. They were asked who were the different proprietors: the flocks were separated and counted. Anxiety and fear, but still with some hope, fluctuated in the countenances of the worthy people. But when this mode of proceeding ended in the division of the flocks among the regiments and companies, whilst, on the other hand, the pieces of paper drawn on Louis XVI. were handed over quite civilly to their proprietors, and their woolly favourites were slaughtered at their feet by the impatient and hungry soldiers, I confess that my eyes and my soul have seldom witnessed a more cruel spectacle, and more profound manly suffering in all its gradations. The Greek tragedies alone have anything so purely, deeply pathetic."

Throughout these pages he is seen interesting himself in men, in science, in nature, but not at all in the cause of the war. Soldiers fishing attract him to their side, and he is in ecstasies with the optical phenomena observed in the water. The bombardment of Verdun begins, and he enters a battery which is hard at work, but is driven out by the intolerable roar of the cannon: on his way out he meets the Prince Reuss. "We walked up and down behind some vineyard walls, protected by

them from the cannon-balls. After talking about sundry political matters, by which we only got entangled in a labyrinth of hopes and cares, the prince asked me what I was occupied with at present, and was much surprised when, instead of speaking of tragedies and novels, excited by the phenomenon of to-day, I began to speak with great animation of the doctrine of colours." He has been reproached for this "indifference," and by men who extol Archimedes for having prosecuted his studies during the siege of Syracuse. It was as natural for Goethe to have his mind occupied with a curious phenomenon amid the roar of cannon, as it was for the soldiers to sing libertine songs when marching to death. The camp too afforded him, with its opportunities for patience, some good opportunities for observing mankind. He notices the injurious influence of war upon the mind: "You are daring and destructive one day, and humane and creative the next; you accustom yourselves to phrases adapted to excite and keep alive hope in the midst of the most desperate circumstances; by this means a kind of hypocrisy is produced of an unusual character, and is distinguished from the priestly and courtly kind."

After detailing some of the miseries of the campaigning life, he says: "Happy is he whose bosom is filled with a higher passion. The colour phenomena observed at the spring never for a moment left me. I thought it over and over again, that I might be able to make experiments on it. I dictated to Vogel a loose sketch of my theory, and drew the figures afterward. These papers I still possess with all the marks of the rainy weather, as witnesses of the faithful study in the dubious path I had entered." Very characteristic of his thirst for knowledge is this daring exposure of himself: "I had heard much of the cannon fever, and I wanted to know what kind of thing it was. Ennui and a spirit which every kind of danger

excited to daring, nay, even to rashness, induced me to ride up quite coolly to the outwork of La Lune. This was again occupied by our people; but it presented the wildest aspect. The roofs were shot to pieces, the corn-shocks scattered about, the bodies of men mortally wounded stretched upon them here and there, and occasionally a spent cannon-ball fell and rattled among the ruins of the tile-roofs. Quite alone, and left to myself, I rode away on the heights to the left, and could plainly survey the favourable position of the French; they were standing in the form of a semicircle, in the greatest quiet and security; Kellermann, on the left wing, being the easiest to reach. . . . I had now arrived quite in the region where the balls were playing across me: the sound of them is curious enough, as if it were composed of the humming of tops, the gurgling of water, and the whistling of birds. They were less dangerous by reason of the wetness of the ground; wherever one fell it stuck fast. And thus my foolish experimental ride was secured against the danger at least of the balls rebounding. In these circumstances, I was soon able to remark that something unusual was taking place within me: I paid close attention to it, and still the sensation can be described only by similitude. It appeared as if you were in some extremely hot place, and at the same time quite penetrated by the heat of it, so that you feel yourself, as it were, quite one with the element in which you are. The eyes lose nothing of their strength or clearness; but it is as if the world had a kind of brown-red tint, which makes the situation, as well as the surrounding objects, more impressive. I was unable to perceive any agitation of the blood, but everything seemed rather to be swallowed up in the glow of which I speak. From this, then, it is clear in what sense this condition can be called a fever. It is remarkable, however, that the horrible, uneasy feeling arising from it is

produced in us solely through the ears. For the cannon thunder, the howling, whistling, crashing of the balls through the air, is the real cause of these sensations. After I had ridden back, and was in perfect security, I remarked with surprise that the glow was completely extinguished, and not the slightest feverish agitation was left behind. On the whole, this condition is one of the least desirable, as indeed among my dear and noble comrades I found scarcely one who expressed a really passionate desire to try it. Thus the day had passed away; the French stood immovable, Kellermann having taken also a more advantageous position. Our people were withdrawn out of the fire, and it was exactly as if nothing had taken place. The greatest consternation was diffused among the army. That very morning they had thought of nothing short of spitting the whole of the French and devouring them; nay, I myself had been tempted to take part in this dangerous expedition from the unbounded confidence I felt in such an army and in the Duke of Brunswick; but now every one went about alone, nobody looked at his neighbour, or if it did happen, it was to curse or to swear. Just as night was coming on, we had accidentally formed ourselves into a circle, in the middle of which the usual fire even could not be kindled: most of them were silent, some spoke, and in fact the power of reflection and judgment was awanting to all. At last I was called upon to say what I thought of it; for I had been in the habit of enlivening and amusing the troop with short sayings. This time I said: From this place and from this day forth commences a new era in the world's history, and you can all say that you were present at its birth."

The night brought rain and wind. They had lain on the ground behind a hill which protected them from the cutting wind, when it was proposed that they should

bury themselves in the earth, covered by their cloaks. Holes were dug, and even Karl August himself did not refuse this "premature burial." Goethe wrapped himself in a blanket and slept better than Ulysses. In vain a colonel remonstrated, and pointed out to them that the French had a battery on the opposite hill with which they could bury the sleepers in real earnest. Sleep and warmth for the present were worth more than security against possible danger.

The defeat at Valmy, slight as it was, discouraged the Prussians, and exhilarated the French. The Prussians, startled at the cry of *Vive la nation!* with which the Republicans charged them, and finding themselves on a foreign territory without magazines, stores, or any preparations for a great conflict, perceived the mistake they had made, and began to retreat. It was doubtless a great relief to Goethe to hear that he had not much longer to endure the hardships of campaigning. He had no interest in the cause, and he had not gained, by closer contact with the leaders, a higher opinion of their characters. "Although I had already found among the diplomatic corps some genuine and valuable friends, I could not refrain, so often as I saw them in the midst of these great movements, from making some odd comparisons which forced themselves irresistibly upon my mind: they appeared to me as so many playhouse directors, who choose the pieces, distribute the parts, and move about unseen; whilst the actors, doing their best, and well prompted, have to commit the result of their exertions to fortune and the humour of the public."

He fell in with a collection of pamphlets, and among them were the instructions of the Notables. "The moderation of the people's demands at this time, the modesty with which they were put forward, formed a striking contrast to the violence, insolence, and desperation of the present state of things. I read these

papers with genuine emotion, and took copies of some of them."

His return was slow. Meanwhile the arms of the French seemed everywhere victorious. Verdun and Longwy were once more occupied by the Republicans. On the Rhine, Trèves and Mainz had capitulated to Custine. Goethe says:

"In the midst of this misery and confusion, a missing letter of my mother's found me, and reminded me, in a strange manner, of many peaceful passages of my youth, and circumstances connected with my family and native town. My uncle, the Alderman Textor, had died, whose near relationship had excluded me, during his lifetime, from the honourable and useful post of a Frankfort councillor; and now, in accordance with an established and laudable custom, they thought immediately of me, I being pretty far advanced among the Frankfort graduates. My mother had been commissioned to ask me whether I would accept the office of councillor if I were chosen one of those to be balloted for, and the golden ball should fall to me. Such a question could not, perhaps, have arrived at a more singular time than the present; I was taken by surprise, and thrown back upon myself; a thousand images started up before me, and prevented me from forming any connected conclusion. But as a sick person or prisoner forgets for the moment his pains and troubles whilst listening to some tale which is related to him, so was I also carried back to other spheres and other times. I found myself in my grandfather's garden, where the espaliers, richly laden with nectarines, were wont to tempt the grandson's longing appetite; and only the threat of banishment from this paradise, only the hope of receiving from the good old grandfather's own hand the red-cheeked fruit when ripe, could restrain this longing within reasonable bounds till the proper time at length arrived. Then I

saw the venerable old man busied with his roses, and carefully protecting his hands from the thorns with the antiquarian gloves, delivered up as tribute by tax-freed cities; like the noble Laertes, — all but in his longings and his sorrows. Afterward I saw him in his mayor's robes, with gold chain, sitting on the throne-seat under the emperor's portrait; then, last of all, alas! in his dotage, for several years in his sick-chair; and, finally, in his grave! On my last journey to Frankfort, I had found my uncle in possession of the house, court, and garden: as a worthy son of such a father, he attained, like him, the highest offices in the government of this free town. Here, in this intimate family circle, in this unchanged old well-known place, these boyhood recollections were vividly called forth, and brought with new emphasis before me. They were united also with other youthful feelings which I must not conceal. What citizen of a free city will deny that he has been ambitious of, sooner or later, rising to the dignity of councillor, alderman, or burgomaster; and has industriously and carefully striven, to the best of his ability, to attain to them, or perhaps other less important offices? For the pleasing thought of one day filling some post in the government is awakened early in the breast of every republican, and is liveliest and proudest in the soul of a boy. I could not, however, abandon myself long to these pleasing dreams of my childhood. But, too soon aroused, I surveyed the ominous locality which surrounded me, the melancholy circumstances which hemmed me in, and, at the same time, the cloudy, obscured prospect in the direction of my native town. I saw Metz in the hands of the French; Frankfort threatened, if not already taken; the way to it obstructed; and within those walls, streets, squares, dwellings, the friends of my youth, and my relations, already overtaken perhaps by the same misfortunes from which I had seen Longwy and Verdun so cruelly

suffer: who would have dared to rush headlong into the midst of such a state of things? But even in the happiest days of that venerable corporation, it would have been impossible for me to agree to this proposal; the reasons for which are easily explained. For twelve years I had enjoyed singular good fortune, — the confidence as well as the indulgence of the Duke of Weimar. This highly gifted and cultivated prince was pleased to approve of my inadequate services, and gave me facilities for developing myself, which would have been possible under no other conditions in my native country. My gratitude was boundless, as well as my attachment to his august consort and mother, to his young family, and to a country to which I had not been altogether unserviceable. And had I not to think also of newly acquired, highly cultivated friends, and of so many other domestic enjoyments and advantages which had sprung from my favourable and settled position?"

A pleasant surprise was in store for him on his return to Weimar, in the shape of the house in the *Frauenplan*, which the duke had ordered to be rebuilt during his absence. This house, considered a palace in those days,[1] was a very munificent gift. It was not so far advanced in the reconstruction but that he could fashion it according to his taste; he arranged the splendid staircase, which was too large for the proportions of the house, but was a pleasant reminiscence of Italy.

The passer-by sees, through the windows, the busts of the Olympian gods, which stand there as symbols of

[1] I presume it is to this, and not to the old house, that the Duchess Amalia refers when, writing to the Frau Rath, she says: "I could say many pleasant things about this place, among others that the palace of the Herr Geheimden Rath Goethe, both outwardly and inwardly, will be splendidly adorned, and promises to be one of the most beautiful in Weimar." But this letter is dated October, 1782.

calmness and completeness. On entering the hall, the eye rests upon two noble casts, in niches: or rests on the plan of Rome which decorates the wall, and on Meyer's "Aurora," which colours the ceiling. The group of Ildefonso stands near the door; and on the threshold, welcome speaks in the word "SALVE." On the first floor we enter the Juno room, so called from the colossal bust of Juno which consecrates it; on the walls are the "Loggie" of Raphael. To the left of this stands the reception-room; in it is the harpsichord which furnished many a musical evening: Hummel and the young Mendelssohn played on it, Catalani and Sontag sang to it. Over the doors were Meyer's mythological cartoons; on the walls a copy of Aldobrandi's "Wedding," with sketches of the great masters, and etchings. A large cabinet contained the engraving and gems; a side closet the bronze statuettes, lamps, and vases. On the other side, connected with the Juno room, and opposite the reception-room, were three small rooms. The first contained sketches of Italian masters, and a picture by Angelica Kaufmann. The second and third contained various specimens of earthenware, and an apparatus to illustrate the "Farbenlehre." A prolongation of the Juno room backwards was the Bust room, with the busts of Schiller, Herder, Jacobi, Voss, Sterne, Byron, etc. To this succeeded, a few steps lower, and opening on the trellised staircase leading to the garden, a small room in which he was fond of dining with a small party. The garden was tastefully laid out. The summer-houses contained his natural history collections.

But the sanctuary of the house is the study, library, and bedroom. In the rooms just described the visitor sees the tokens of Goethe's position as minister and lover of Art. Compared with the Weimar standard of that day, these rooms were of palatial magnificence;

but compared even with the Weimar standard, the rooms into which we now enter are of a more than bourgeois simplicity. Passing through an antechamber, where in cupboards stand his mineralogical collections, we enter the study, a low-roofed, narrow room, somewhat dark, for it is lighted only through two tiny windows, and furnished with a simplicity quite touching to behold.[1] In the centre stands a plain oval table of unpolished oak. No arm-chair is to be seen, no sofa, nothing which speaks of ease. A plain hard chair has beside it the basket in which he used to place his handkerchief. Against the wall, on the right, is a long pear-tree table, with book-shelves, on which stand lexicons and manuals. Here hangs a pincushion, venerable in dust, with the visiting-cards and other trifles which death has made sacred. Here, also, a medallion of Napoleon, with this circumscription: "Scilicet immenso superest ex nomine multum." On the side wall, again, a bookcase with some works of poets. On the wall to the left is a long desk of soft wood, at which he was wont to write. On it lie the original manuscripts of "Götz" and the "Elegies," and a bust of Napoleon, in milk-white glass, which in the light shimmers with blue and flame colour; hence prized as an illustration of the "Farbenlehre." A sheet of paper with notes of contemporary history is fastened near the door, and behind this door schematic tables of music and geology. The same door leads into a bedroom, if bedroom it can be called, which no maid servant in England would accept without a murmur: it is a closet with a window. A simple bed, an arm-chair by its side, and a tiny washing-table with a small white basin on it, and a sponge, is all the furniture. To enter this room with any feeling for the greatness and goodness of him who slept here, and who here slept his last

[1] I describe it as it now stands, just as it was on the day of his death.

sleep, brings tears into our eyes, and makes the breathing deep.

From the other side of the study we enter the library, which should rather be called a lumber-room of books. Rough deal shelves hold the books, with paper labels on which are written "philosophy," "history," "poetry," etc., to indicate the classification. It was very interesting to look over this collection; and the English reader will imagine the feelings with which I took down a volume of "Taylor's Historic Survey of German Poetry," sent by Carlyle, and found, in the piece of paper used as a book-mark, a bit of Carlyle's own handwriting.

Such was Goethe's house during the many years of his occupation. At the time of which we now write it was of course somewhat different. The pleasure of reconstructing it, and the happiness of being once more at home with Christiane and his boy, able to pursue his studies in peace, were agreeable contrasts with his life in the camp. Meyer had returned from Italy, and came to live with him. Meyer's historical knowledge and true friendship made him very valuable. Optical studies alternated with discussions upon Art.

In this year, 1793, much was studied, but little produced. The comedy of the "Bürgergeneral" was written, that of the "Aufgeregten" was commenced, and the "Unterhaltungen der Ausgewanderten" planned. More important was the version of "Reinecke Fuchs." All these are products of the French Revolution. The "Bürgergeneral" is really an amusing little piece, setting forth the absurdity of loud-mouthed patriotism; but it has greatly incensed all those who are angry with Goethe for not having espoused the cause of the Revolution. It is admitted that there was much in the Revolution which was hollow, foolish, and wicked; but the Revolution was too serious a thing to be treated only with ridicule. I quite agree with this opinion. But

considering his sentiments and position, it seems to me natural that he who neither sympathised with the Revolution nor absolved the Royalists, who could therefore neither write dithyrambs of freedom nor cries of indignation, who did not fully appreciate the historical importance of the event, and only saw its temporal and *personal* aspect, should have taken to Comedy, and to Comedy alone. He did not write invectives; he did not write satires. He saw the comic aspect, and he smiled. As events deepened the shadows of the picture, he too became more serious. The "Aufgeregten," which was never completed, would have given a completer expression to his political views. "Reinecke Fuchs" was commenced as a relief; it was turned to as an "unholy World-bible," wherein the human race exhibited its unadorned and unfeigned animal nature with marvellous humour, in contrast to the bloody exhibition which the Reign of Terror then offered as a spectacle to the world.

He was now, May, 1794, once more to join the army which was besieging Mainz. The narrative, which is also to be found in Mr. Farie's translation, presents him in no new aspect, and may therefore be passed over with this allusion. The city capitulated on the 24th of July, and on the 28th of August — his forty-fifth birthday — he reëntered Weimar; to finish "Reinecke Fuchs," and to pursue his scientific researches. "I go home," he wrote to Jacobi. "There I can draw a circle round me, in which nothing can enter, save Love and Friendship, Science and Art. I will not complain of the past, for I have learnt much that was valuable."

Experience is the most effective schoolmaster; although, as Jean Paul says, "the school-fees are somewhat heavy." Goethe was always willing to pay the fees, if he could but get the instruction.

Book the Sixth

1794 to 1805

"Für mich war es ein neuer Frühling, in welchem Alles froh neben einander keimte, und aus aufgeschlossenen Samen und Zweigen hervorging."

"Denn Er war unser! Mag das stolze Wort
Den lauten Schmerz gewaltig übertönen.
Er mochte sich bei uns, im sichern Port
Nach wildem Sturm zum Dauernden gewöhnen.
Indessen schritt sein Geist gewaltig fort
Ins Ewige des Wahren, Guten, Schönen,
Und hinter ihm, im wesenlosen Scheine
Lag, was uns Alle bändigt, das Gemeine!"

GOETHE, OF SCHILLER.

CHAPTER I.

GOETHE AND SCHILLER.

THERE are few nobler spectacles than the friendship of two great men; and the History of Literature presents nothing comparable to the friendship of Goethe and Schiller. The friendship of Montaigne and Etienne de la Boëtie was, perhaps, more passionate and entire; but it was the union of two kindred natures, which from the first moment discovered their affinity, not the union of two rivals incessantly contrasted by partisans, and originally disposed to hold aloof from each other. Rivals Goethe and Schiller were, and are; natures in many respects directly antagonistic; chiefs of opposing camps, and brought into brotherly union only by what was highest in their natures and their aims.

To look on these great rivals was to see at once their profound dissimilarity. Goethe's beautiful head had the calm, victorious grandeur of the Greek ideal; Schiller's the earnest beauty of a Christian looking toward the Future. The massive brow, and large-pupilled eyes, — like those given by Raphael to the infant Christ, in the matchless Madonna di San Sisto, — the strong and well-proportioned features, lined indeed by thought and suffering, yet showing that thought and suffering have troubled, but not vanquished, the strong man, — a certain healthy vigour in the brown skin, and an indescribable something which shines out from the face, make Goethe a strik-

ing contrast to Schiller, with his eager eyes, narrow brow, — tense and intense, — his irregular features lined by thought and suffering, and weakened by sickness. The one *looks*, the other *looks out*. Both are majestic; but one has the majesty of repose, the other of conflict. Goethe's frame is massive, imposing; he seems much taller than he is. Schiller's frame is disproportioned; he seems less than he is. Goethe holds himself stiffly erect; the long-necked Schiller "walks like a camel."[1] Goethe's chest is like the torso of the Theseus; Schiller's is bent, and has lost a lung.

The impression made by these two remarkable men on a young Englishman when he saw them for the first time in 1801 may here be cited. Mr. Henry Crabb Robinson was taken to visit Goethe by Seume. "On our entrance he rose, and with a rather cool and distant air beckoned us to take seats. As he fixed his beaming eye on Seume, who took the lead, I had his profile before me, and this was the case during the whole of our twenty minutes' stay. He was then about fifty-two years of age, and was beginning to be corpulent. He was, I think, one of the most oppressively handsome men I ever saw. My feeling of awe was heightened by an accident. The last play which I had seen in England was 'Measure for Measure,' in which one of the most remarkable moments was when John Kemble (the duke), disguised as a monk, had his hood pulled off by Lucio. On this, Kemble, with an expression of wonderful dignity, ascended the throne and delivered judgment on the wrong-doers. Goethe sat in precisely the same attitude, and I had precisely the same side-view of his face. My companion talked

[1] This picturesque phrase was uttered by Tieck, the sculptor, to Rauch, from whom I heard it. Let me add that Schiller's brow is called in the text "narrow," in defiance of Dannecker's bust, with which I compared Schiller's skull, and found that the sculptor, as usual, had grossly departed from truth in his desire to idealise. Artists always believe they know better than Nature.

about his youth of adversity and strange adventures. Goethe smiled with, as I thought, the benignity of condescension. When we were dismissed, and I was in the open air, I felt as if a weight were removed from my breast, and exclaimed 'Gott sei dank!' . . . Schiller had a wild expression and a sickly look; and his manners were those of one who is not at his ease. There was in him a mixture of the wildness of genius and the awkwardness of a student. His features were large and irregular."[1]

A similar difference is traceable in details. "An air that was beneficial to Schiller acted on me like poison," Goethe said to Eckermann. "I called on him one day, and as I did not find him at home, I seated myself at his writing-table to note down various matters. I had not been seated long before I felt a strange indisposition steal over me, which gradually increased, until at last I nearly fainted. At first I did not know to what cause I should ascribe this wretched and to me unusual state, until I discovered that a dreadful odour issued from a drawer near me. When I opened it, I found, to my astonishment, that it was full of rotten apples. I immediately went to the window and inhaled the fresh air, by which I was instantly restored. Meanwhile his wife came in, and told me that the drawer was always filled with rotten apples, because the scent was beneficial to Schiller, and he could not live or work without it."

As another and not unimportant detail, characterising the healthy and unhealthy practice of literature, it may be added that Goethe wrote in the freshness of morning, entirely free from stimulus; Schiller worked in the feverish hours of night, stimulating his languid brain with coffee and champagne.

[1] "Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson," 1869, i. 111 and 114. The same work contains many other notices of Goethe and the celebrities at Weimar and Jena.

In comparing one to a Greek ideal, the other to a Christian ideal, it has already been implied that one was the representative of Realism, the other of Idealism. Goethe has himself indicated the capital distinction between them: Schiller was animated with the idea of Freedom; Goethe, on the contrary, was animated with the idea of Nature. This distinction runs through their works: Schiller, always pining for something greater than Nature, wishing to make men Demigods; Goethe always striving to let Nature have free development, and produce the highest form of Humanity. The Fall of Man was to Schiller the happiest of all events, because thereby men fell away from pure *instinct* into conscious *freedom;* with this sense of freedom came the possibility of Morality. To Goethe this seemed paying a price for Morality which was higher than Morality was worth; he preferred the ideal of a condition wherein Morality was unnecessary. Much as he might prize a good police, he prized still more a society in which a police would never be needed.

But while the contrast between these two is the contrast of real and ideal, of *objective* and *subjective* tendencies, apparent when we consider the men in their totality, this is only true of them relatively to each other. To speak of Goethe as a Realist, pure and simple, is erroneous; and to speak of Schiller as an Idealist, pure and simple, is not less so. Gervinus strikingly remarks that, compared with Nicolai or Lichtenberg, Goethe appears as an Idealist; compared with Kant and his followers, Schiller appears as a Realist. If Schiller, in comparison with Goethe, must be called a self-conscious poet, in comparison with the Romanticists he is *naïve* and instinctive. Indeed all such classifications are necessarily imperfect, and must only be used as artifices of language, by which certain general and predominant characteristics may be briefly

indicated. Goethe and Schiller were certainly different natures; but had they been so fundamentally opposed, as it is the fashion to consider them, they could never have become so intimately united. They were opposite and allied, with somewhat of the same differences and resemblances as are traceable in the Greek and Roman Mars. In the Greek Mythology the God of War had not the prominent place he attained in Rome; and the Greek sculptors, when they represented him, represented him as the victor returning, after conflict, to repose: holding in his hand the olive-branch, while at his feet sate Eros. The Roman sculptors, or those who worked for Rome, represented Mars as the God of War in all his terrors, in the very act of leading on to victory. But different as these two conceptions were, they were both conceptions of the God of War; Goethe may be likened to the one, and Schiller to the other: both were kindred spirits united by a common purpose.

Having touched upon the points of contrast, it will now be needful to say a word on those points of resemblance which served as the basis of their union. It will be unnecessary to instance the obvious points which two such poets must have had in common; the mention of some less obvious will suffice for our present purpose. They were both profoundly convinced that Art was no luxury of leisure, no mere amusement to charm the idle, or relax the care-worn; but a mighty influence, serious in its aims, although pleasurable in its means; a sister of Religion, by whose aid the great world-scheme was wrought into reality. This was with them no mere sonorous phrase. They were thoroughly in earnest. They believed that Culture would raise Humanity to its full powers; and they, as artists, knew no Culture equal to that of Art. It was probably a perception of this belief that made Karl Grün say, "Goethe was the most ideal Idealist the earth has

ever borne; an *æsthetic* Idealist." And hence the origin of the widespread error that Goethe "only looked at life as an artist," *i. e.* cared only for human nature inasmuch as it afforded him materials for Art; a point which will be more fully examined hereafter. (Book vii. ch. 4.) The phases of their development had been very similar, and had brought them to a similar standing-point. They both began rebelliously; they both emerged from titanic lawlessness in passing from youth to manhood. In Italy the sight of ancient masterpieces completed Goethe's metamorphosis. Schiller had to work through his in the gloomy North, and under the constant pressure of anxieties. He too pined for Italy, and thought the climate of Greece would make him a poet. But his intense and historical mind found neither stimulus nor enjoyment in plastic Art. Noble men and noble deeds were the food which nourished his great soul. "His poetic purification came from moral ideals; whereas in Goethe the moral ideal came from the artistic."[1] Plutarch was his Bible. The ancient masterpieces of poetry came to him in this period of his development, to lead him gently by the hand onwards to the very point where Goethe stood. He read the Greek tragedians in wretched French translations, and with such aid laboriously translated the "Iphigeneia" of Euripides. Homer, in Voss's faithful version, became to him what Homer long was to Goethe. And how thoroughly he threw himself into the ancient world may be seen in his poem "The Gods of Greece." Like Goethe, he had found his religious opinions gradually separating him more and more from the orthodox Christians; and, like Goethe, he had woven for himself a system out of Spinoza, Kant, and the Grecian sages.

At the time, then, that these two men seemed most opposed to each other, and *were* opposed in feeling,

[1] "Gervinus," v. p. 152.

they were gradually drawing closer and closer in the very lines of their development, and a firm basis was prepared for solid and enduring union. Goethe was five and forty, Schiller five and thirty. Goethe had much to give, which Schiller gratefully accepted; and if he could not in return influence the developed mind of his great friend, or add to the vast stores of its knowledge and experience, he could give him that which was even more valuable, *sympathy* and *impulse*. He excited Goethe to work. He withdrew him from the engrossing pursuit of science, and restored him once more to poetry. He urged him to finish what was already commenced, and not to leave his works all fragments. They worked together with the same purpose and with the same earnestness, and their union is the most glorious episode in the lives of both, and remains as an eternal exemplar of a noble friendship.

Of all the tributes to Schiller's greatness which an enthusiastic people has pronounced, there is nothing perhaps which carries a greater weight of tenderness and authority than Goethe's noble praise. It is a very curious fact in the history of Shakespeare, that he is not known to have written a single line in praise of any contemporary poet. The fashion of those days was for each poet to write verses in eulogy of his friends; and the eulogies written by Shakespeare's friends are such as to satisfy even the idolatry of admirers in our day; but there exists no eulogy, no single verse, from him whose eulogy was more worth having than that of all the rest put together.[1] Had literary gossip, pregnant with literary malice, produced

[1] There is, indeed, a couplet in the "Passionate Pilgrim" which names Spenser with high praise; but it is doubtful whether the "Passionate Pilgrim" is anything but the attempt of a bookseller to palm off on the public a work which Shakespeare never wrote; and it is certain that Shakespeare is *not* the author of the sonnet in which Spenser is mentioned, that sonnet having been previously published by a Richard Barnfield.

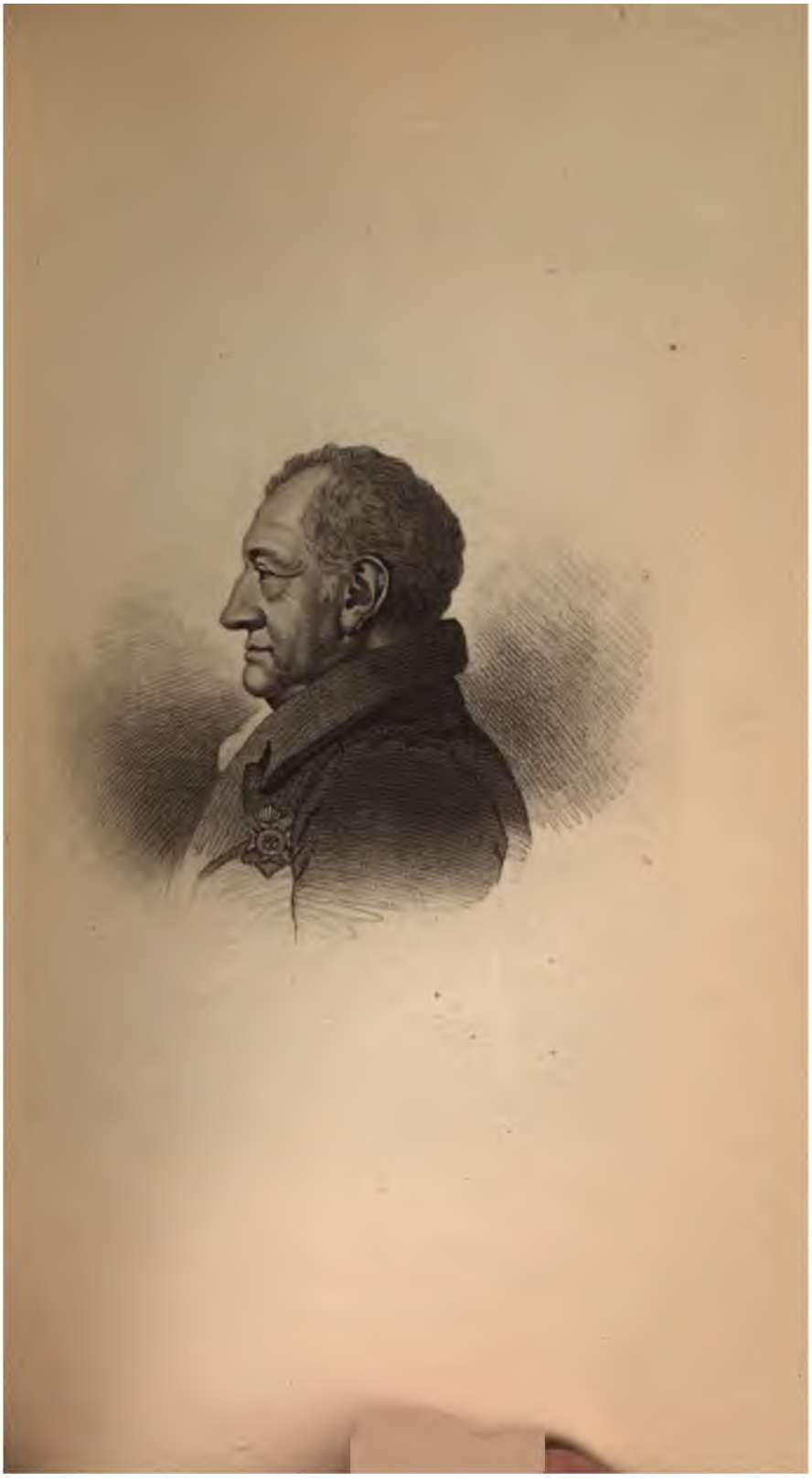
the absurd impression that Shakespeare was cold, selfish, and self-idolatrous, this curious fact would have been made a damning proof. I have so often in these pages used Shakespeare as a contrast to Goethe, that it would be wrong not to contrast him also on this point. Of all the failings usually attributed to literary men, Goethe had the least of what could be called jealousy; of all the qualities which sit gracefully on greatness, he had the most of magnanimity. The stream of time will carry down to after ages the memory of several whose names will live only in his praise; and the future students of Literary History will have no fact to note of Goethe similar to that noted of Shakespeare; they will see how enthusiastic was his admiration of his rivals, Schiller, Voss, and Herder, and how quick he was to perceive the genius of Scott, Byron, Béranger, and Manzoni.

But I must quit this attempt to characterise the two rivals, and proceed to narrate their active coöperation in the common work.

While the great world was agitated to its depths by the rapid march of the Revolution, the little world of Weimar pursued the even tenor of its way, very much as if nothing concerning the destinies of mankind were then in action. Because Goethe is the greatest figure in Germany, the eyes of all Germans are turned toward him, anxious to see how he bore himself in those days. They see him — not moving with the current of ideas, not actively sympathising with events; and they find no better explanation of what they see than the brief formula that "he was an Egoist." If they look, however, at his companions and rivals, they will find a similar indifference. Wieland, the avowed enemy of all despotism, was frightened by the Reign of Terror into demanding a dictatorship. Nor — strange as it may appear — was Schiller, the poet of Freedom, the creator of Posa, more favourable to the French

Portrait of Goethe

Photogravure from a rare old print



than Goethe himself.[1] From the very first he had looked with no favourable eye on the Revolution, and the trial of Louis XVI. produced so deep an impression on him, that he commenced an address to the National Convention, which was, however, outrun by rapid events. Like Wieland, he saw no hope but in a dictatorship.

Such being the position of the leading minds, we are not to wonder if we find them pursuing their avocations just as if nothing were going on in France or elsewhere. Weimar could play no part in European politics. The men of Weimar had their part to play in Literature, through which they saw a possible regeneration. Believing in the potent efficacy of culture, they devoted themselves with patriotism to that. A glance at the condition of German Literature will show how patriotism had noble work to do in such a cause.

The Leipsic Fair was a rival to our Minerva Press; Chivalry romances, Robber-stories and Spectre-romances, old German superstitions, Augustus Lafontaine's sentimental family-pictures, and plays of the *Sturm und Drang* style, swarmed into the sacred places of Art, like another invasion of the Goths. On the stage Kotzebue was king. The "Stranger" was filling every theatre, and moving the sensibilities of a too readily moved pit. Klopstock was becoming more and more oracular, less and less poetical. Jean Paul, indeed,

[1] The Republic had honoured him in a singular way. The Assemblée Législative of 1792, on the proposition of Guadet, had decreed that the title of French Citizen should be conferred on seventeen celebrated strangers, among whom were the names of Wilberforce, Washington, Kosciusko, Campe, Klopstock, and Anacharsis Clootz, "orator of mankind." A member proposed to add the name of Schiller, the author of "Les Brigands," a drama then being performed. The name became Giller in the *procès verbal*, which was transformed into Gille, *publiciste allemand*, in the *Bulletin des Lois;* and thus it appears in the diploma signed by Danton and Roland, dated September 6, 1792, now preserved in the Library at Weimar.

gave signs of power and originality; but except Goethe and Schiller, Voss, who had written his "Luise" and translated Homer, alone seemed likely to form the chief of a school of which the nation might be proud.

It was in this state of things that Schiller conceived the plan of a periodical, — *Die Horen*, — memorable in many ways to all students of German Literature. Goethe, Herder, Kant, Fichte, the Humboldts, Klopstock, Jacobi, Engel, Meyer, Garve, Matthisson, and others, were to form a phalanx whose irresistible might should speedily give them possession of the land. "The more the narrow interests of the present," says Schiller, in the announcement of this work, "keep the minds of men on the stretch, and subjugate while they narrow, the more imperious is the need to free them through the higher universal interest in that which is purely *human* and removed beyond the influences of time, and thus once more to reunite the divided political world under the banner of Truth and Beauty."

Such was the undertaking which formed the first link in the friendship of Goethe and Schiller. How they stood toward each other has been seen in the seventh chapter of the preceding book. One day, in May, 1794, they met, coming from a lecture given by Batsch at the Natural History Society in Jena; in talking over the matter, Goethe, with pleased surprise, heard Schiller criticise the fragmentary Method which teachers of science uniformly adopted. When they arrived at Schiller's house, Goethe went in with him, expounding the theory of Metamorphoses with great warmth. Taking up a pen, he made a rapid sketch of the typical plant. Schiller listened with great attention, seizing each point clearly and rapidly, but shaking his head at last, and saying: "This is not an observation, it is an Idea." Goethe adds: "My surprise was painful, for these words clearly indicated the point which separated us. The opinions he had expressed in his essay

on 'Anmuth und Würde' recurred to me, and my old repulsion was nearly revived. But I mastered myself, and answered that I was delighted to find I had Ideas without knowing it, and to be able to contemplate them with my own eyes." There can be no question of Schiller having been in the right, though perhaps both he and Goethe assigned an exclusively subjective meaning to the phrase. The typical plant, Goethe knew very well, was not to be found in nature; but he thought it was *revealed* in plants.[1] Because he arrived at the belief in a type through direct observation and comparison, and not through *à priori* deduction, he maintained that this type was a perception (*Anschauung*), not an idea. Probably Schiller was more impressed with the metaphysical nature of the conception than with the physical evidence on which it had been formed. The chasm between them was indeed both broad and deep; and Goethe truly says: "It was in a conflict between the Object and the Subject, the greatest and most interminable of all conflicts, that began our friendship, which was eternal." A beginning had been made. Schiller's wife, for whom Goethe had a strong regard, managed to bring them together; and the proposed journal, *Die Horen*, brought their activities and sympathies into friendly union. Rapid was the growth of this friendship, and on both sides beneficial. Schiller paid a fortnight's visit at Weimar; Goethe was frequently in Jena. They found that they agreed not only on subjects, but also on the mode of looking at them. "It will cost me a long time to unravel all the ideas you have awakened in me," writes Schiller, "but I hope none will be lost."

[1] Goethe, speaking of his labours in another department, says, "I endeavoured to find the Primitive Animal (*Urthier*), in other words, the Conception, the Idea of an Animal." ("Werke," xxxvi. p. 14.)

Regretting that he could not give the novel "Wilhelm Meister" for the *Horen*, having already promised it to a publisher, Goethe nevertheless sends Schiller the manuscript from the third book onwards, and gratefully profits by the friendly criticism with which he reads it. He gave him, however, the two "Epistles," the "Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten," the "Roman Elegies," and the essay on "Literary Sansculottism."

The mention of "Wilhelm Meister" leads us to retrace our steps a few months, when the active interest he took in the direction of the Weimar Theatre revived his interest in this novel over which he had dawdled so many years. He finished it; but he finished it in quite a different spirit from that in which it was commenced, and I do not at all feel that Schiller's criticisms really were of advantage to it. But of this anon.

Toward the end of July he went to Dessau, and from thence to Dresden, where he strove with Meyer to forget the troubles of the time in contemplation of the treasures of Art. "All Germany," he writes to Fritz von Stein, "is divided into anxious, croaking, or indifferent men. For myself, I find nothing better than to play the part of Diogenes, and roll my tub." He returned, and daily grew more and more intimate with Schiller. They began the friendly interchange of letters, which have since been published in six volumes, known to every student. In Goethe's letters to other friends at this time, 1795, is noticed an inward contentment, which he rightly attributes to this new influence. "It was a new spring to me," he says, "in which all seeds shot up, and gaily blossomed in my nature." Contact with Schiller's earnest mind and eager ambition gave him the stimulus he so long had wanted. The ordinary spurs to an author's activity — the need of money or the need of fame — pricked him

not. He had no need of money; of fame he had enough; and there was no nation to be appealed to. But Schiller's restless striving, and the emulation it excited, acted like magic upon him; and the years of their friendship were for both the most productive. In an unpublished letter from Frau von Stein to Charlotte von Lengenfeld, dated 1795, there is this noticeable sentence: "I also feel that Goethe is drawing nearer to Schiller, for he has appeared to be now a little more aware of my existence. He seems to me like one who has been shipwrecked for some years on one of the South Sea Islands, and is now beginning to think of returning home." By the shipwreck is of course meant Christiane Vulpius; and by home, the salon of the Frau von Stein. It is possible, however, to question these metaphors.

On the 1st of November another son is born to Goethe. He bids Schiller to bring his contribution in the shape of a daughter, that the poetic family may be united and increased by a marriage. But this child only lives a few days. On the 20th Schiller writes: "We have deeply grieved for your loss. You can console yourself with the thought that it has come so early, and thus more affects your *hopes* than your love." Goethe replies: "One knows not whether in such cases it is better to let sorrow take its natural course, or to repress it by the various aids which culture offers us. If one decides upon the latter method, *as I always do*, one is only strengthened for a moment; and I have observed that nature always asserts her right through some other crisis."

No other crisis seems to have come in this case. He was active in all directions. Göttling, in Jena, had just come forward with the discovery that phosphorus burns in nitrogen; and this drew Goethe's thoughts to Chemistry, which for a time was his recreation. Anatomy never lost its attraction: and through the snow

on bitter mornings he was seen trudging to Loder's lectures, with a diligence young students might have envied. The Humboldts, especially Alexander, with whom he was in active correspondence, kept alive his scientific ardour; and it is to their energetic advice that we owe the essays on Comparative Anatomy. He was constantly talking to them on these subjects, eloquently expounding his ideas, which would probably never have been put to paper had they not urged him to it. True it is that he did not finish his essays; and only in 1820 did he print what he had written.[1] These conversations with the Humboldts embraced a wide field. "It is not perhaps presumptuous to suppose," he says, "that many ideas have thence, through *tradition*, become the common property of science, and have blossomed successfully, although the gardener who scattered the seeds is never named."

Poetical plans were numerous; some of them were carried into execution. A tragedy on the subject of "Prometheus Unbound" was begun, but never continued. The Hymn to Apollo was translated. "Alexis und Dora," the "Vier Jahreszeiten," and several of the smaller poems, were written and given to Schiller for the *Horen* or the "Musen-Almanach;" not to mention translations from Madame de Staël, and the "Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini." But the product of this time which made the greatest sensation was the "Xenien."

It has already been indicated that the state of German Literature was anything but brilliant, and that public taste was very low. The *Horen* was started to raise that degraded taste by an illustrious union of "All the Talents." It came — was seen — and made

[1] This detail is important, as indeed every question of date must be in science. When the Essays were published, the principal ideas had already been brought before the world; when the Essays were written, the ideas were extraordinary novelties.

no conquest. Mediocrity in arms assailed it in numerous journals. Stupidity, against which, as Schiller says, "the gods themselves are powerless," was not in the least moved. The *Horen* was a double failure, for it failed to pay its expenses, and it failed to excite any great admiration in the few who purchased it. Articles by the poorest writers were attributed to the greatest. Even Frederick Schlegel attributed a story by Caroline von Wolzogen to Goethe. The public was puzzled — and somewhat *bored*. "All the Talents" have never yet succeeded in producing a successful periodical, and there are some good reasons for supposing that they never will. The *Horen* met with the fate of *The Liberal*, in which Byron, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, Moore, Hazlitt, and Peacock were engaged. But the two great poets who had taken the greatest interest in it were not to be ignored with impunity. They resolved on a literary vengeance, and their vengeance was the "Xenien."

A small library might be collected of the works called forth by these epigrams; but for the English reader the topic necessarily has but slender interest. He is not likely to exclaim with Boas: "On the 31st of October, 1517, was commenced the Reformation of the Church in Germany; in October, 1796, commenced the Reformation of Literature. As Luther published his Theses on Wittemberg, so Goethe and Schiller published their 'Xenien.' No one before had the courage so to confront sacred Dulness, so to lash all Hypocrisy." One sees that some such castigation was needed, by the loud howling which was set up from all quarters: but that any important purification of Literature was thereby effected is not so clear.

The idea was Goethe's. It occurred to him while reading the "Xenia" of Martial: and having thrown off a dozen epigrams, he sent them to Schiller for the "Musen-Almanach." Schiller was delighted, but said

there must be a hundred of them, chiefly directed against the journals which had attacked the *Horen;* the hundred was soon thought too small a number, and it was resolved to have a thousand. They were written in the most thorough spirit of collaboration, the idea being sometimes given by one, and the form by another; one writing the first verse, and leaving the second to the other. There is no accurate separation of their epigrams, giving each to each, although critics have made an approximative selection; and Maltzahn has recently aided this by collation of the original manuscripts.

The sensation was tremendous. All the bad writers in the kingdom, and they were an army, felt themselves personally aggrieved. The pietists and sentimentalists were ridiculed; the pedants and pedagogues were lashed. So many persons and so many opinions were scarified, that no wonder if the public ear was startled at the shrieks of pain. Counterblasts were soon heard, and the "Xenien-Sturm" will remain as a curious episode of the war of the "many foolish heads against the two wise ones." "It is amusing," writes Goethe to Schiller, "to see what has really irritated these fellows, what they believe will irritate us, how empty and low is their conception of others, how they aim their arrows merely at the outworks, and how little they dream of the inaccessible citadel inhabited by men who are in earnest." The sensation produced by the "Dunciad" and by the "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" was mild compared with the sensation produced by the "Xenien;" although the wit and sarcasm of the "Xenien" are as milk and water compared with the vitriol of the "Dunciad" and the "English Bards."

Read by no stronger light than that which the appreciation of wit *as* wit throws on these epigrams, and not by the strong light of personal indignity, or

personal malice, the "Xenien" will appear very weak productions, and the sensation they excited must appear somewhat absurd. But a similar disappointment meets the modern reader of the *Anti-Jacobin*. We know that its pages were the terror of enemies, the malicious joy of friends. We know that it was long held as a repertory of English wit, and the "Days of the *Anti-Jacobin*" are mentioned by Englishmen as the days of the "Xenien" are by Germans. Yet now that the *personal* spice is removed, we read both of them with a feeling of wonder at their enormous influence. In the "Xenien" there are a few epigrams which still titillate the palate, for they have the salt of wit in their lines. There are many also which have no pretension to wit, but are admirable expressions of critical canons and philosophic ideas. If good taste could not be created by attacks on bad taste, there was at any rate some hope that such a castigation would make certain places sore; and in this sense the "Xenien" did good service.

The publication of "Wilhelm Meister" falls within this period, and we may now proceed to examine it as a work of art.

CHAPTER II.

WILHELM MEISTER.

A FRENCHMAN, an Englishman, and a German were commissioned, it is said, to give the world the benefit of their views on that interesting animal, the Camel. Away went the Frenchman to the *Jardin des Plantes*, spent an hour there in rapid investigation, returned and wrote a *feuilleton*, in which there was no phrase the Academy could blame, but also no phrase which added to the general knowledge. He was perfectly satisfied, however, and said, "*Le voilà, le chameau!*" The Englishman packed up his tea-caddy and a magazine of comforts; pitched his tent in the East; remained there two years studying the Camel in its habits; and returned with a thick volume of facts, arranged without order, expounded without philosophy, but serving as valuable materials for all who came after him. The German, despising the frivolity of the Frenchman, and the unphilosophic matter-of-factness of the Englishman, retired to his study, there *to construct the Idea of a Camel from out of the depths of his Moral Consciousness.* And he is still at it.

With this myth the reader is introduced into the very heart of that species of criticism which, flourishing in Germany, is also admired in some English circles, under the guise of Philosophical Criticism, and which has been exercised upon "Wilhelm Meister" almost as mercilessly as upon "Faust."

My readers, it is hoped, will not generalise this remark so as to include within it all German critics and men of culture: such an extension of the remark would be almost as unfair in Germany as in England. There are many excellent critics in Germany, and excellent judges who are not critics; it would be too bad if our laughter at pedants and pretenders were to extend to these. But no one acquainted with Germany and German literature can fail to recognise the widespread and pernicious influence of a mistaken application of Philosophy to Art: an application which becomes a tyranny on the part of real thinkers, and a hideous absurdity on the part of those who merely echo the jargon of the schools. It is this criticism which has stifled Art in Germany, and ruined many a young artist who showed promise. It is a fundamental mistake to translate Art into the formulas of Philosophy, and then christen the translation the Philosophy of Art. This kind of critic is never easy until he has shifted his ground. He is not content with the work as it presents itself. He endeavours to get *behind* it, beneath it, into the depths of the soul which produced it. He is not satisfied with what the artist has *given*, he wants to know what he *meant*. He guesses at the meaning; the more remote the meaning lies on the wandering tracks of thought, the better pleased is he with the discovery; and he sturdily rejects every simple explanation in favour of this exegetical Idea. Thus the phantom of Philosophy hovers mistily before Art, concealing Art from our eyes. It is true the Idea said to underlie the work was never conceived by any one before, least of all by the Artist; but *that* is the glory of the critic: he is proud of having plunged into the depths. Of all horrors to the German of this school there is no horror like that of the surface — it is more terrible to him than cold water.

"Wilhelm Meister" has been the occasion of so many ideas constructed out of the depths of moral consciousness, it has been made to *mean* such wondrous (and contradictory) things, that its author must have been astonished at his unsuspecting depth. There is some obvious symbolism in the latter part, which I have little doubt was introduced to flatter the German tendency; as I have no sort of doubt that its introduction has spoiled a masterpiece. The obvious want of unity in the work has given free play to the interpreting imagination of critics. Hillebrand boldly says that the "Idea of 'Wilhelm Meister' is precisely this — that it has no Idea," — which does not greatly further our comprehension.

Instead of trying to discover the Idea, let us stand fast by historical criticism, and see what light may be derived from a consideration of the origin and progress of the work, which, from first to last, occupied him during twenty years. The first six books — beyond all comparison the best and most important — were written before the journey to Italy — they were written during the active theatrical period when Goethe was manager, poet, and actor. The contents of these books point very clearly to his intention of representing in them the whole nature, aims, and art of the comedian; and in a letter to Merck he expressly states that it is his intention to portray the actor's life. Whether at the same time he meant the actor's life to be symbolical, cannot be positively determined. That may, or may not, have been a *secondary* intention. The primary intention is very clear. Nor had he, at this time, yielded to the seduction of attempting the symbolical in Art. He sang as the birds sing; his delight was in healthy, objective fact; he had not yet donned the robes of an Egyptian priest, or learned to write in hieroglyphs. He was seriously interested in acting, and the actor's art. He thought the life of a player

a good framework for certain pictures, and he chose it. Afterward, the idea of making these pictures symbolical certainly did occur to him, and he concluded the romance upon this afterthought.

Gervinus emphatically records his disbelief of the opinion that Goethe originally intended to make Wilhelm *unfit* for success as an actor; and I think a careful perusal of the novel, even in its present state, will convince the reader that Gervinus is right. Instead of Wilhelm's career being represented as the development of a false tendency — the obstinate cultivation of an imperfect talent, such as was displayed in Goethe's own case with respect to plastic Art — one sees, in spite of some subsequent additions thrown in to modify the work according to an afterthought, that Wilhelm has a true inborn tendency, a talent which ripens through practice. With the performance of "Hamlet" the apogee is reached; and here ends the first plan. Having written so far, Goethe went to Italy. We have seen the changes which came over his views. After a lapse of ten years he resumes the novel; and having in that period lived through the experience of a false tendency — having seen the vanity of cultivating an imperfect talent — he *alters* the plan of his novel, makes it symbolical of the erroneous striving of youth toward culture; invents the cumbrous machinery of a Mysterious Family, whose watchful love has guided all his steps, and who have encouraged him in error that they might lead him through error unto truth. This is what in his old age he declared — in the "Tag- und Jahres-Hefte," and in his letters to Schiller — to have been the plan upon which it was composed. "It sprang," he says, "from a dim feeling of the great truth that Man often seeks that which Nature has rendered impossible to him. All dilettantism and false tendency is of this kind. Yet it is possible that every false step should lead to

an inestimable good, and some intimation of this is given in Meister." To Eckermann he said: "The work is one of the most incalculable productions; I *myself can scarcely be said to have the key to it.* People seek a central point, and that is difficult to find; nor is it even right. I should think a *rich manifold life brought close to our eyes would be enough in itself without any express tendency*, which, after all, is only for the intellect." This is piercing to the very kernel. The origin of the symbolical matter, however, lies in the demands of the German intellect for such food. "But," he continues, "if anything of the kind is insisted upon, it will, perhaps, be found in the words which Frederick at the end addresses to the hero, when he says, 'Thou seemst to me like Saul, the son of Kish, who went out to seek his father's asses, and found a kingdom.' Keep only to this; for, in fact, the whole work seems to say nothing more than that man, despite all his follies and errors, being led by a higher hand, reaches some happy goal at last."

Schiller, who knew only the *second* plan, objected, and with justice, to the disproportionate space allotted to the players. "It looks occasionally," he wrote, "as if you were writing *for* players, whereas your purpose is only to write *of* them. The care you bestow on certain little details of this subject and individual excellences of the art, which, although important to the player and manager, are not so to the public, give to your representation the false appearance of a particular design; and even one who does not infer such a design, might accuse you of being too much under the influence of a private preference for these subjects." If we accept the latter plan, we must point out the inartistic composition, which allows five books of Introduction, one of disconnected Episode, and only two of Development. This is against all proportion. Yet Frederick Schlegel expressly says that the two

last books are properly speaking the whole work; the others are but preparations.[1]

The purpose, or rather purposes, of "Wilhelm Meister" seem, first, the rehabilitation of Dramatic Art; and, secondly, the theory of Education. The last two books are full of Education. Very wise and profound thought are expressed, and these thoughts redeem the triviality of the machinery. But otherwise these books are lamentably inferior to the first six books in style, in character, in interest. On the whole, "Wilhelm Meister" is, indeed, "an incalculable work." Several readings have intensified my admiration (which at first was tepid), and intensified also my sense of its defects. The beauties are ever new, ever wonderful; the faults press themselves upon notice more sharply than they did at first.

The story opens with great dramatic vivacity. Mariana and old Barbara stand before us, sketched with Shakespearian sharpness of outline and truth of detail. The whole episode is admirable, if we except the lengthy narrative in which Wilhelm details his early passion for the Marionnettes, which has probably made some readers as drowsy as it made Mariana. There is something painfully trivial in this long narrative; and it is an artistic error as a digression. The contrast between Wilhelm and the prosaic Werner is felicitously touched. But the happiest traits are those which show Wilhelm's want of decision, and incapacity of finishing the work he has begun; traits which indicate his peculiar temperament. Indeed throughout the novel Wilhelm is not the hero, but a creature of the incidents. He is a mere nose-of-wax. And this is artfully designed. Egmont and Götz are heroes: living in stormy times, they remain altogether uninflu-

[1] "Charakteristiken und Kritiken," p. 168. Schlegel's review is well worth reading as an example of ingenious criticism, and praise artfully presented under the guise of analysis.

enced by the times. The poet represents noble characters, and he represents them in their strong, clear individuality, superior to circumstance. With Wilhelm, he shows how some characters change obedient to every external influence. The metamorphoses of Wilhelm would have been impossible with a character such as Egmont. This seems so obvious, that one is surprised to find critics objecting to the vacillating character of Wilhelm, as if it were a fault in art. It would be as reasonable to object to the vacillations of Hamlet. Wilhelm is not only led with ease from one thing to another, but is always oscillating in his views of himself. Even his emotions are not persistent. He passes from love of the passionate Mariana to an inclination for the coquettish Philina; from Philina to the Countess, whom he immediately forgets for the Amazon; he is about to marry Theresa, but relinquishes her as soon as he is accepted, and offers himself to Natalie.

There is in this novel evidence of sufficient humour to have made a decidedly humourous writer, had that faculty not been kept in abeyance by other faculties. Wilhelm's unconscious pedantry, and his predominant desire to see the drama illustrated in ordinary life, and to arrange life into a theatre;[1] the count and his eccentricities; the adventures of the players in the castle where they arrive, and find all the urgent necessaries wanting; the costume in which Wilhelm decks himself; the whole character of Philina and that of Frederick — are instances of this humourous power.

To tell the story of this novel would be too great an injustice to it; the reader has, therefore, it must be presupposed, already some acquaintance with it; in default thereof, let him at once make its acquaint-

[1] See especially Book i. cap. 15, for his idea of the private life of players, as if they carried *off* the stage something of their parts *on* the stage.

ance.[1] The narrative being presupposed as known, my task is easy. I have only to refer to the marvellous art with which the characters unfold themselves. We see them, and see through them. They are never described, they exhibit themselves. Philina, for example, one of the most bewitching and original creations in fiction, whom we know as well as if she had flirted with us and jilted us, is never once described. Even her person is made present to us through the impression it makes on others, not by any direct information. We are not told that she was a strange mixture of carelessness, generosity, caprice, wilfulness, affectionateness, and gaiety; a lively girl, of French disposition, with the smallest possible regard for decorum, but with a true decorum of her own; snapping her fingers at the world, disliking conventions, tediousness, and pedantry; without any ideal aspirations, yet also without any affectations; coquetting with all the men, disliked by all the women, turning every one round her finger, yet ready to oblige and befriend even those who had injured her: we are not told this: but as such she lives before us. She is so genuine, and so charming a sinner, that we forgive all her trespasses. On the whole, she is the most original and most difficult creation in the book. Mignon, the great poetical creation, was perhaps less difficult to draw, when once conceived. All the other characters serve as contrasts to Philina. She moves among them and throws them into relief, as they do her. The sentimental, sickly Aurelia, and the sentimental Madame Melina, have an earnestness Philina does not comprehend; but they have the faults of their qualities, and she has neither. She has no more sense of earnestness than a bird. With bird-like gaiety and bird-like enjoyment of existence she chirrups through sunshine and rain. One never thinks of demanding morality from her. Morality? she knows it not, nay,

[1] It has been translated by Carlyle.

has not even a bowing acquaintance with it. Nor can she be called immoral. Constrasting her with Mignon, we see her in contrast with Innocence, Earnestness, Devotion, and vague yearnings for a distant home; for Philina was never innocent; she is as quick and clever as a kitten; she cannot be serious: if she does not laugh she must yawn or cry; devoted she cannot be, although affectionate; and for a distant home, how can that trouble one who knows how to nestle everywhere? It is possible to say very hard words of Philina; but, like many a naughty child, she disarms severity by her grace.

Of Mignon, and her songs, I need say nothing. Painters have tried to give an image of that strange creation which lures the imagination and the heart of every reader; but she defies the power of the pencil. The old Harper is a wild, weird figure, bearing a mystery about with him, which his story at the close finely clears up. He not only adds to the variety of the figures in the novel, but by his unforgetable songs gives a depth of passion and suffering to the work which would otherwise move too exclusively in familiar regions. These two poetic figures, rising from the prosaic background, suggest an outlying world of beauty; they have the effect of a rainbow in the London streets. Serlo, Laertes, the selfish Melina and his sentimental wife, are less developed characters, yet drawn with a masterly skill.

But when we quit their company — that is, when we quit the parts which were written before the journey to Italy, and before the plan was altered — we arrive at characters such as Lothario, the Abbé, the Doctor, Theresa, and Natalie, and feel that a totally new style is present. We have quitted the fresh air of Nature, and entered the philosopher's study; life is displaced by abstractions. Not only does the interest of the story seriously fall off, but the handling of

the characters is entirely changed. The characters are described; they do not live. The incidents are crowded, have little vraisemblance and less interest. The diction has become weak — sometimes positively bad. As the men and women are without passion, so is the style without colour. Schiller, writing of the first book, says: "The bold poetic passages, which flash up from the calm current of the whole, have an excellent effect; they elevate and fill the soul." But the style of the last two books, with the exception of the exquisite Harper's story, is such that in England the novel is almost universally pronounced tedious, in spite of the wonderful truth and variety of character, and the beauty of so many parts. In these later books the narrative is slow, and contains incidents trivial and improbable. The Mysterious Family in the Tower is an absurd mystification; without the redeeming interest which Mrs. Radcliffe would have thrown into it. With respect to the style, it is enough to open at random, and you are tolerably certain to alight upon a passage which it is difficult to conceive how an artist could have allowed to pass. The iteration of certain set forms of phrase, and the abstractness of the diction, are very noticeable. Here is a sentence! "Sie können aber hieraus die unglaubliche Toleranz jener Männer sehen, dass sie eben auch mich auf meinem *Wege*, gerade *deswegen*, weil es mein *Weg* ist, keines*wegs* stören."

One great peculiarity in this work is that which probably made Novalis call it "artistic Atheism."[1] Such a phrase is easily uttered, sounds well, is open to many interpretations, and is therefore sure to find

[1] "Das Buch handelt bloss von gewöhnlichen Dingen, die Natur und der Mysticismus sind ganz vergessen. Es ist eine poetisirte bürgerliche und häusliche Geschichte; das Wunderbare darin wird ausdrücklich als Poesie und Schwärmerei behandelt. Künstlerischer Atheismus ist der Geist des Buchs." — *Schriften*, ii. p. 367.

echoes. I take it to mean that in "Wilhelm Meister" there is a complete absence of all *moral verdict* on the part of the author. Characters tread the stage, events pass before our eyes, things are done and thoughts are expressed: but no word comes from the author respecting the moral bearing of these things. Life forgets in activity all moral verdict. The good is beneficent, but no one praises it; the bad works evil, but no one anathematises it. It is a world in which we see no trace of the preacher, not a glimpse even of his surplice. To many readers this absence is like the absence of salt at dinner. They feel toward such simple objective delineation something of the repugnance felt in Evangelical circles to Miss Edgeworth's Tales. It puts them out. Robert Hall confessed that reading Miss Edgeworth hindered him for a week in his clerical functions; he was completely disturbed by her pictures of a world of happy, active people *without* any visible interference of religion — a sensible, and, on the whole, healthy world, yet without warnings, without exhortations, without any apparent terrors concerning the state of souls.

Much has been said about the immorality of "Wilhelm Meister," which need not be repeated here. Schiller hits the mark in his reply to what Jacobi said on this point: "The criticism of Jacobi has not at all surprised me; for it is as inevitable that an individual like him should be offended by the unsparing truth of your pictures, as it is that a mind like yours should give him cause to be so. Jacobi is one of those who seek only their own ideas in the representation of poets, and prize more what *should be* than *what is;* the contest therefore begins in first principles. So soon as a man lets me see that there is anything in poetical representations that interests him more than internal necessity and truth, I give him up. If he could show you that the immorality of your picture does not proceed from

the nature of the subject, but from the manner in which you treat it, then indeed would you be accountable, not because you had sinned against moral laws, but against critical laws."

"Wilhelm Meister" is not a moral story — that is to say, not a story written with the express purpose of illustrating some obvious maxim. The consequence is that it is frequently pronounced immoral; which I conceive to be an absurd judgment; for if it have no express moral purpose, guiding and animating all the scenes, neither has it an immoral purpose. It may not be written for the edification of virtue; assuredly it is not written for the propagation of vice. If its author is nowhere a preacher, he cannot by his sternest critics be called a pander. All that can be said is that the Artist has been content to paint scenes of life, *without comment;* and that some of these scenes belong to an extensive class of subjects, familiar indeed to the experience of all but children, yet by general consent not much talked of in society. If any reader can be morally injured by reading such scenes in this novel rather than in the newspaper, his moral constitution is so alarmingly delicate, and so susceptible of injury, that he is truly pitiable. Let us hope the world is peopled with robuster natures; a robuster nature need not be alarmed.

But while asserting "Wilhelm Meister" to be in no respect a Moral Tale, I am bound to declare that deep and healthy moral meaning lies in it, pulses through it, speaking in many tones to him who hath ears to hear it. As Wordsworth says of "Tam o' Shanter," "I pity him who cannot perceive that in all this, though there was no moral purpose, there is a moral effect." What each reader will see in it, will depend on his insight and experience. Sometimes this meaning results from the whole course of the narrative; such, for example, as the influence of life upon Wilhelm in

moulding and modifying his character, raising it from mere impulse to the subordination of reason, from dreaming self-indulgence to practical duty, from self-culture to sympathy; but the way this lesson is taught is the artist's, not the preacher's way, and therefore may be missed by those who wait for the moral to be pointed before they are awake to its significance.

The "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul," which occupy the sixth book, have, in some circles, embalmed what was pronounced the corruption of the other books. Stolberg burned all the rest of the work, and kept these chapters as a treasure. Curious indeed is the picture presented of a quiet mystic, who is at the same time an original and strongly marked character; and the effect of religious convictions on life is subtly delineated in the gradual encroachment and final predominance of mysticism on the mind of one who seemed every way so well fitted for the world. Nevertheless, while duly appreciating the picture, I regret that it was not published separately, for it interrupts the story in a most inartistic manner, and has really nothing to do with the rest of the work.

The criticism on "Hamlet," which Wilhelm makes, still remains the best criticism we have on that wonderful play. Very artfully is "Hamlet" made as it were a part of the novel; and Rosenkranz praises its introduction not only because it illustrates the affinity between Hamlet and Wilhelm, both of whom are reflective, vacillating characters, but because Hamlet is further allied to Wilhelm in making the Play a touchstone, whereby to detect the truth, and determine his own actions.

Were space at disposal, the whole of Schiller's criticism on this work might fitly be given here from his enthusiastic letter; but I must content myself with one extract, which is quite delightful to read: "I account it the most fortunate incident in my exist-

ence, that I have lived to see the completion of this work; that it has taken place while my faculties are still capable of improvement; that I can yet draw from this pure spring; and the beautiful relation there is between us makes it a kind of religion with me to feel toward what is yours as if it were my own, and so to purify and elevate my nature that my mind may be a clear mirror, and that I may thus deserve, in a higher sense, the name of your friend. How strongly have I felt on this occasion that the Excellent is a power; that by selfish natures it can be felt only as a power; and that only where there is disinterested love can it be enjoyed. I cannot describe to you how deeply the truth, the beautiful vitality, the simple fulness of this work, has affected me. The excitement into which it has thrown my mind will subside when I shall have perfectly mastered it, and that will be an important crisis in my being. This excitement is the effect of the beautiful, and only the beautiful, and proceeds from the fact that my intellect is not yet entirely in accordance with my feelings. I understand now perfectly what you mean when you say that it is strictly the beautiful, the true, that can move you even to tears. Tranquil and deep, clear, and yet, like nature, unintelligible, is this work; and all, even the most trivial collateral incident, shows the clearness, the equanimity of the mind whence it flowed."

CHAPTER III.

THE ROMANTIC SCHOOL.

"AFTER the mad challenge of the 'Xenien,'" writes Goethe to Schiller, "we must busy ourselves only with great and worthy works of Art, and shame our opponents by the manifestation of our poetical natures in forms of the Good and Noble." This trumpet-sound found Schiller alert. The two earnest men went earnestly to work, and produced their matchless ballads, and their great poems, "Hermann und Dorothea" and "Wallenstein." The influence of these men on each other was very peculiar. It made Goethe, in contradiction to his native tendency, speculative and theoretical. It made Schiller, in contradiction to his native tendency, realistic. Had it not urged Goethe to rapid production, we might have called the influence wholly noxious; but seeing what was produced, we pause ere we condemn. "You have created a new youth for me," writes Goethe, "and once more restored me to Poetry, which I had almost entirely given up." They were both much troubled with Philosophy at this epoch. Kant and Spinoza occupied Schiller; Kant and scientific theories occupied Goethe. They were both, moreover, becoming more and more imbued with the spirit of ancient Art, and were bent on restoring its principles. They were men of genius, and therefore these two false tendencies — the tendency to Reflection, and the tendency to Imitation — were less hurtful to *their* works than to the national culture. Their

genius saved them, in spite of their errors; but their errors misled the nation. It is remarked by Gervinus, that "Philosophy was restored in the year 1781, and profoundly affected all Germany. Let any one draw up a statistical table of our literary productions, and he will be amazed at the decadence of Poetry during the last fifty years in which Philosophy has been supreme." Philosophy has distorted Poetry, and been the curse of Criticism. It has vitiated German Literature; and it produced, in combination with the tendency to Imitation, that brilliant error known as the Romantic School.

A few words on this much talked of school may not be unacceptable. Like its offspring, *L'École Romantique*, in France, it had a critical purpose which was good, and a retrograde purpose which was bad. Both were insurgent against narrow critical canons; both proclaimed the superiority of Mediæval Art; both sought, in Catholicism and in National Legends, meanings profounder than those current in the literature of the day. The desire to get deeper than Life itself led to a disdain of reality and the present. Hence the selection of the Middle Ages and the East as regions for the ideal: they were not the Present, and they were not classical; the classical had already been tried, and against it the young Romantic School was everywhere in arms. In other respects the German and French schools greatly differed. The Schlegels, Tieck, Novalis, and Werner had no enemy to combat in the shape of a severe National Taste, such as opposed the tentatives of Victor Hugo, Dumas, and Alfred de Vigny. On the contrary, they were supported by a large body of the nation, for their theories only carried further certain tendencies which had become general. Thus in as far as these theories were critical, they were little more than jubilations over the victorious campaigns won by Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and Schiller. The Schle-

gels stood upon the battle-field, now silent, and sang a hymn of victory over the bodies of the slain. Frederick Schlegel, by many degrees the most considerable critic of this school, began his career with an Anthology from Lessing's works: "Lessing's Geist; eine Blumenlese seiner Ansichten;" he ended it with admiration for Philip the Second and the cruel Alva, and with the proclamation that Calderon was a greater poet than Shakespeare. Frederick Schlegel thus represents the whole Romantic School from its origin to its close.

Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and Solger are the philosophers of this school; from the two former came the once famous, now almost forgotten, principle of "Irony," which Hegel[1] not only refuted as a principle, but showed that the critics themselves made no use of it. No one, not even Tieck, attempted to exhibit the "irony" of Shakespeare, the god of their idolatry. Among the services rendered by Tieck and A. W. Schlegel, the translation of Shakespeare must never be forgotten; for although that translation is by no means so accurate as is generally believed, being often singularly weak, and sometimes grossly mistaken in its interpretation of the meaning, it is nevertheless a translation which, on the whole, has, perhaps, no rival in literature, and has served to make Shakespeare as familiar to the Germans as to us.

In their crusade against the French, in their naturalisation of Shakespeare, and their furtherance of Herder's efforts toward the restoration of a Ballad Literature and the taste for Gothic Architecture, these Romanticists were with the stream. They also flattered the national tendencies when they proclaimed "Mythology and Poetry, symbolical Legend and Art, to be one and indivisible,"[2] whereby it became clear

[1] "Æsthetik," i. p. 84–90.
[2] F. Schlegel: "Gespräche über Poesie," p. 263.

that a new Religion, or at any rate a new Mythology, was needed, for "the deepest want and deficiency of all modern Art lies in the fact that the artists have no Mythology."[1]

While Fichte, Schelling, and Schleiermacher were tormented with the desire to create a new Philosophy and a new Religion, it soon became evident that a Mythology was not to be created by programme; and as a Mythology was indispensable, the Romanticists betook themselves to Catholicism, with its saintly Legends and saintly Heroes; some of them, as Tieck and A. W. Schlegel, moved by nothing more than poetic enthusiasm and dilettantism; others, as F. Schlegel and Werner, with thorough conviction, accepting Catholicism and all its consequences.

Solger had called Irony the daughter of Mysticism; and how highly these Romanticists prized Mysticism is known to all readers of Novalis. To be mystical was to be poetical as well as profound; and critics glorified mediæval monstrosities because of their deep spiritualism, which stood in contrast with the pagan materialism of Goethe and Schiller. Once commenced, this movement carried what was true in it rapidly onwards to the confines of nonsense. Art became the handmaid of Religion. The canon was laid down that only in the service of Religion had Art ever flourished, — only in that service *could* it flourish: a truth from which strange conclusions were drawn. Art became a propaganda. Fra Angelico and Calderon suddenly became idols. Werner was proclaimed a Colossus, by Wackenroder, who wrote his "Herzensergiessungen eines Kunstliebenden Klosterbruders," with Tieck's aid, to prove, said Goethe, that because some monks were artists, all artists should turn monks. Then it was that men looked to Faith for miracles in Art. Devout study of the Bible was thought to be the

[1] F. Schlegel: "Gespräche über Poesie," p. 274.

readiest means of rivalling Fra Angelico and Van Eyck, and inspiration was sought in a hair-shirt. Catholicism had a Mythology, therefore painters went over in crowds to the Roman Church. Cornelius and Overbeck lent real genius to the attempt to revive the dead forms of early Christian Art, as Goethe and Schiller did to revive the dead forms of Grecian Art. Overbeck, who painted in a cloister, was so thoroughly penetrated by the ascetic spirit, that he refused to draw from the living model, lest it should make his works too *naturalistic;* for to be true to Nature was tantamount to being false to the higher tendencies of Spiritualism. Some had too much of the artistic instinct to carry their principles into these exaggerations; but others less gifted, and more bigoted, carried the principles into every excess. A band of these reformers established themselves in Rome, and astonished the Catholics quite as much as the Protestants. Cesar Masini, in his work "Dei Puristi in Pittura," thus describes them: "Several young men came to Rome from Northern Germany in 1809. They abjured Protestantism, adopted the costume of the Middle Ages, and began to preach the doctrine that painting had died out with Giotto, and, to revive it, a recurrence to the old style was necessary. Under such a mask of piety they concealed their nullity. Servile admirers of the rudest periods in Art, they declared the pigmies were giants, and wanted to bring us back to the dry, hard style and barbarous imperfection of a Buffalmacco, Calandrino, Paolo Uccello, when we had a Raphael, a Titian, and a Correggio." In spite of their exaggerated admiration of the Trecentisti, in spite of a doctrine which was fundamentally vicious, the Romanticists made a decided revolution, not only in Literature but in Painting, and above all in our general estimate of painters. If we now learn to look at the exquisite works of Fra Angelico, Ghirlandajo, and Massaccio

with intense pleasure, and can even so far divest ourselves of the small prejudices of criticism as to be deeply interested in Giotto, Gozzoli, or Guido da Arezzo, feeling in them the divine artistic faculty which had not yet mastered artistic expression, it is to the preaching of the Romanticists that we owe this source of noble enjoyment. In poetry the Romanticists were failures, but in painting they achieved marked success. Whatever may be thought of the German School, it must be confessed that before Overbeck, Cornelius, Schadow, Hess, Lessing, Hübner, Sohn, and Kaulbach, the Germans had no painters at all; and they have in these men painters of very remarkable power.

To return to Goethe. He was led by Schiller into endless theoretical discussions. They philosophised on the limits of epic and dramatic poetry; read and discussed Aristotle's Poetics; discussions which resulted in Goethe's essay, "Ueber epische und dramatische Poesie;" and, as we gather from their correspondence, scarcely ventured to take a step until they had seen how Theory justified it. Goethe read with enthusiasm Wolf's "Prolegomena" to Homer, and at once espoused its principles.[1] The train of thought thus excited led him from the origin of epic songs to the origin of the Hebrew songs, and Eichhorn's "Introduction to the Old Testament" led him to attempt a new explanation of the wanderings of the people of Israel, which he subsequently inserted in the notes to the "Westöstlicher Divan."

Nor was he busy with epical theories only; he also gave himself to the production of epics. "Hermann und Dorothea," the most perfect of his poems, was written at this time. "Achilleis" was planned and

[1] Later on in life he returned to the old conviction of the unity of Homer. It is to be regretted that in England Wolf's masterly work is seldom read, the critics contenting themselves with second-hand statements of his views, which fail to do them justice.

partly executed; "Die Jagd" was also planned, but left unwritten, and subsequently became the prose tale known as "Die Novelle." This year of 1797 is moreover memorable as the year of ballads, in which he and Schiller, in friendly rivalry, gave Germany lyrical masterpieces. His share may be estimated, when we learn that in this year were written the "Bride of Corinth," the "Zauberlehrling," "Der Gott und die Bajadere," and the "Schatzgräber." In an unpublished letter to Körner, he writes, "You will have learned from Schiller that we are now making attempts in the ballad line. His are, as you know already, very felicitous. I wish that mine may be in some sort worthy to stand beside them; he is, in every sense, more competent to this species of poetry than I am."

In the same year "Faust" was once more taken up. The "Dedication," the "Prologue in Heaven," and the Intermezzo of "Oberon and Titania's Marriage" were written. But while he was in this mood, Hirt came to Weimar, and in the lively reminiscences of Italy, and the eager discussions of Art which his arrival awakened, all the northern phantoms were exorcised by southern magic. He gave up "Faust," and wrote an essay on the "Laokoon." He began once more to pine for Italy. This is characteristic of his insatiable hunger for knowledge; he never seemed to have mastered *material* enough. Whereas Schiller, so much poorer in material, and so much more inclined to production, thought this Italian journey would only embarrass him with fresh objects; and urged Meyer to dissuade him from it. He did not go; and I think Schiller's opinion was correct: at the point now reached he had nothing to do but to give a form to the materials he had accumulated.

In the July of this year he, for the third time, made a journey into Switzerland. In Frankfort he introduced Christiane and her boy to his mother, who

received them very heartily, and made the few days' stay there very agreeable. It is unnecessary for us to follow him on his journey, which is biographically interesting only in respect to the plan of an epic on "William Tell" which he conceived, and for which he studied the localities. The plan was never executed. He handed it over to Schiller for his drama on that subject, giving him at the same time the idea of the character of Tell, and the studies of localities, which Schiller managed to employ with a mastery quite astonishing to his friend. The same brotherly coöperation is seen in the composition of "Wallenstein." It is not true, as was currently supposed in Germany, that Goethe wrote any portion of that work. He has told us himself he only wrote two unimportant lines. But his counsel aided Schiller through every scene; and the bringing it on the stage was to him like a triumph of his own.

In the spring of 1798 Schelling's Philosophy of Nature, and his own plans for a History of the Theory of Colours, lured him from poetry; but Schiller again brought him back to it. "Faust" was resumed, and the last tragic scenes of the First Part were written. In the summer he was much at Jena with Schiller, consequently with poetry. Achilles and Tell, the ancient and the modern world, as Schäfer remarks, struggled for priority, but neither obtained it, because he was still perplexed in his epic theories. The studies of the Iliad had "hunted him through the circle of enthusiasm, hope, insight, and despair." No sooner did he leave Jena than, as he confessed, he was drawn by another polarity. Accordingly, we see him busy with an art-journal, the *Propyläen*. He was also busy with the alteration of the Theatre, the boards of which, on the 12th of October, 1798, were made for ever memorable by the production of "Wallenstein's Camp" and "Prologue." On the 30th January, 1799,

the birthday of the Duchess Luise, the "Piccolomini" was produced; and, on the 20th of April, "Wallenstein's Tod."

It was in this year that a young advocate, in Edinburgh, put forth a translation of "Götz von Berlichingen," and preluded to a fame as great as Goethe's own; and it was in the December of this year that Karl August's generosity enabled Schiller to quit Jena, and come to Weimar for the rest of his life, there in uninterrupted intercourse with Goethe to pursue the plans so dear to both, especially in the formation of a national stage. I will take advantage of this change to insert a chapter on "Hermann und Dorothea," which was published in 1796–97; and I will afterward group together the scattered details of the theatrical management, so as to place them before the reader in a continuous narrative.

CHAPTER IV.

HERMANN UND DOROTHEA.

THE pleasure every one finds in making acquaintance with the original stories from which Shakespeare created his marvellous plays, is the pleasure of detecting how genius can improve upon the merest hint, and how with his own vital forces it converts lifeless material into immortal life. This pleasure also carries the conviction that there is no lack of subjects for an artist, if he have but the eye to see them. It shows us that great poets are not accustomed to cast about for subjects worthy of treatment; on the contrary, the merest hint is enough to form the nucleus of a splendid work: a random phrase will kindle a magnificent conception.

Very like the material offered by Bandello to Shakespeare is the material offered to Goethe by the old narrative[1] from which he created one of the most faultless of modern poems. Herein we learn how a rich and important citizen of Altmühl has in vain tried to persuade his son to marry. The Salzburg emigrants pass through the town, and among them the son finds "a maiden who pleases him right well;" he inquires after her family and bringing up, and as all he hears is satisfactory, away he hies to his father, declaring that unless this Salzburg maiden be given him, he will re-

[1] "Das Liebthätige Gera gegen die Salzburgischen Emigranten. Das ist: kurze und wahrhaftige Erzählung wie dieselben in der Gräflich Reuss-Plauischen Residenz-Stadt angekommen, aufgenommen, und versorget, auch was an und von vielen derselben Gutes gesehen und gehöret worden." Leipsic: 1732.

main unmarried all his life. The father, aided by the pastor, tries to persuade him from such a resolution. But their efforts being vain, the pastor advises the father to give his consent, which is done. Away goes the son to the maiden, and asks her if she is willing to enter his father's domestic service. She accepts, and is presented to the father. But he, ignorant of his son's *ruse*, and believing he sees before him the betrothed, asks her whether she is fond of his son. The maiden thinks they are laughing at her, but on learning that they are serious in wishing her to belong to the family, declares herself quite ready, and draws from her bosom a purse containing two hundred ducats, which she hands to her bridegroom as her dowry.

This is the story out of which grew "Hermann und Dorothea." An ordinary story, in which the poet alone can see a poem; *what* he has seen, every reader of German literature well knows; and those to whom the poem is unknown must be content with the following analysis.

The epoch is changed to that of the French Revolution. The emigrants are driven from home by political events. The scene is on the right side of the Rhine. The streets of a quiet little village are noisy with unaccustomed movement; every one is crowding to see the sad procession of emigrants passing through, in the heat and dust of a summer afternoon. Mine Host of the Golden Lion, sitting at his doorway, marvels at such curiosity, but applauds the active benevolence of his wife, who has sent their son with linen, food, and drink, to bestow upon the sufferers, "for to give is the duty of those who have."

And now are seen returning some of the curious. See how dusty their shoes, and how their faces are burning! They come back wiping the perspiration from their glowing faces; the old couple rejoice at having sat quiet at home, contenting themselves with what

will be told them of the sight. Sure enough, here comes the pastor, and with him the apothecary: seating themselves on the wooden bench, they shake the dust off their shoes, and fan their hot faces with their handkerchiefs. They narrate what they have seen; and mine host, sighing, hopes his son will overtake the emigrants, and give them what has been sent. But the heat suggests to him that they should retire into the cool back parlour, and, out of the way of the flies, refresh themselves with a bottle of Rhine wine. There, over the wine, mine host expresses his wish to see his son married. This is the whole of the first canto; and yet, slight as the material is, the wonderful objective treatment gives it substance. The fresh air of the country breathes from the verse.

In the second canto Hermann appears before his father and friends. The pastor's quick eye detects that he has returned an altered man. Hermann narrates how he accomplished his mission. Overtaking the emigrants, he fell in with a cart drawn by oxen, wherein lay a poor woman beside the infant to which she had just given birth. Leading the oxen was a maiden, who came toward him with the calm confidence of a generous soul, and begged his aid for the poor woman whom she had just assisted in her travail. Touched with pity, and feeling at once that this maiden was the best person to distribute justly the aid he had brought, Hermann gave it all into her hands. They parted, she gratefully pursuing her sad journey, he thoughtfully returning home. Love has leaped into his heart, and, by the light of his smile, the pastor sees he is an altered man.

On hearing this tale, the apothecary hugs himself with the consolation of not having wife and children to make him anxious in these anxious times; "the single man escapes the easiest." But Hermann reproves him, asking, "Is it well that a man should feel

himself alone in joy and sorrow, not understanding how to share these joys and sorrows? I never was so willing to marry as to-day; for many a good maiden needs the protection of a husband, and many a man needs the bright consolation of a wife, in the shadow of misfortune." Hereupon the father, smiling, exclaims, "I hear you with pleasure; such a sensible word you have seldom uttered." And his mother also applauds him, referring to her marriage as an example. Memory travels back complacently to the day of her betrothal. It was in the midst of misfortune — a fire had destroyed all their property — but in that hour of misfortune their union was decided. The father here breaks in, and says the story is true, but evidently wishes to warn his son from any imitation of his own venture. With admirable art and humour his fatherly anxiety is depicted. He married a girl who had nothing when he himself had nothing; but now, when he is old and well-to-do in the world, this idea of beginning life upon no solid foundation of fortune is alarming to him. He paints the difficulty of keeping house, the advantages of fortune, and concludes with a decisive intimation to Hermann that he expects a rich daughter-in-law to be brought into the house. He indicates the daughters of a rich neighbour, and wishes Hermann to select one. But Hermann has not only a new love in his heart, he has an old repugnance to these rich neighbours, who mocked his simplicity and ridiculed him because he was not as familiar with the personages of an opera as they were. This enrages his father, who upbraids him for being a mere peasant without culture, and who angrily declares he will have no peasant-girl brought into the house as his daughter-in-law, but a girl who can play the piano, and who can draw around her the finest people of the town. Hermann, in silence, quits the room; and thus closes the second canto.

The third canto carries on the story. Mine host

continues his angry eloquence. It is his opinion that the son should always rise higher in the social scale than the father: for what would become of the house, or the nation, without this constant progress? "You are always unjust to your son," replies the mother, "and thus frustrate your own wishes. We must not hope to form children after our notions. As God has given them us, so must we have them and love them, bring them up as best we can, and let them have their own disposition. For some have this and others that gift. One is happy in one way, another in another. I won't have my Hermann abused. He is an excellent creature. But with daily snubbing and blame you crush his spirit." And away she goes to seek her son. "A wonderful race the women," says the host, smiling, as his wife departs, "just like children. They all want to live after their own fashion, and yet be praised and caressed!" The old apothecary, carrying out the host's argument respecting the continual improvement of one's station, happily displays his character by a speech of quiet humour, describing his own anxiety to improve the appearance of his house, and how he has always been hindered by the fear of the expense. The contrast of characters in this poem is of the finest and sharpest: mother and father, pastor and apothecary, all stand before us in distinctive, yet unobtrusive individuality, such as only the perfection of art achieves.

In the fourth canto, the mother seeks her son. The description of this search is a striking specimen of Goethe's descriptive poetry, being a series of pictures without a metaphor, without an image, without any of the picturesque aids which most poets employ; and yet it is vivid and picturesque in the highest degree. I wish I dared quote it. But the reader of German can seek it in the original; and translation is more than ever unjust to a poet where style is in question.

In the stable she seeks him, expecting to find him

with his favourite stallion; then she goes into the garden (not omitting to set up the tree-props and brush the caterpillars from the cabbages, like a careful housewife, as she is!), then through the vineyard, until she finds him seated under the pear-tree, in tears. A charming scene takes place between them. Hermann declares his intention of setting off in defence of fatherland; he is eloquent on the duties of citizens to give their blood for their country. But the mother knows very well it is no political enthusiasm thus suddenly moving him to quit his home; she has divined his love for Dorothea, the maiden whom he met among the emigrants; she questions him, and receives his confidence. Yes, it is because he loves Dorothea, and because his father has forbidden him to think of any but a rich bride, that he is about to depart. His father has always been unjust to him. Here interposes the mother; persuades Hermann to make the first advances to his father, certain that the paternal anger is mere hasty words, and that the dearest wish of Hermann's heart will not be disregarded. She brings him back with these hopes.

In the fifth canto the friends are still sipping from green glasses the cool Rhine wine, and arguing the old question. To them enter mother and son. She reminds her husband how often they have looked forward to the day when Hermann should make choice of a bride. That day has arrived. He has chosen the emigrant maiden. Mine host hears this in ominous stillness. The pastor rises, and heartily backs Hermann in his prayer. He looks upon this choice as an inspiration from above, and knows Hermann well enough to trust him in such a choice. The father is still silent. The apothecary, cautious ever, suggests a middle course. He does not trust implicitly in these inspirations from above. He proposes to inquire into the character of the maiden, and as he is not easily to be deceived, he undertakes to bring back a true

report. I need scarcely point out the superiority of this treatment of the old story, wherein the lover first inquires into the character of the maiden, and then makes up his mind to have her. Hermann needs no inquiry — but neither does he shirk it. He urges the apothecary to set off, and take the pastor with him, two such experienced men being certain to detect the truth. For himself he is sure of the result. Mine host, finding wife and friends against him, consents, on a worthy report being brought by pastor and apothecary, to call Dorothea his daughter. The two commissioners seat themselves in the cart, and Hermann, mounting the box, drives them swiftly to the village. Arriving there, they get out. Hermann describes Dorothea, that they may recognise her; and awaits their return. Very graphic is the picture of this village, where the wanderers are crowded in barns and gardens, the streets blocked up with carts, men noisily attending to the lowing cows and horses, women busily washing and drying on every hedge, while the children dabble in the stream. Through this crowd the two friends wander, and witness a quarrel, which is silenced by an old magistrate, who afterward gives them satisfactory details about Dorothea. This episode is full of happy touches and thoughtful poetry. The friends return joyful to Hermann, and tell him he may take Dorothea home. But while they have been inquiring about her, he, here on the threshold of his fate, has been torturing himself with doubts as to whether Dorothea will accept him. She may love another; what is more probable? She may refuse to come with them into a strange house. He begs them to drive home without him. He will alone ask Dorothea, and return on foot with her if she consent. The pastor takes the reins, but the cautious apothecary, willing enough to entrust the pastor with the care of his soul, has misgivings about his power of saving his body.

The pastor reassures him, and they disappear in a cloud of dust, leaving Hermann to gaze after them motionless, fixed in thought.

The next two cantos are exquisitely poetical. As Hermann stands by the spring, he sees Dorothea coming with a water jug in each hand. He approaches her, and she smiles a friendly smile at his approach. He asks why she comes so far from the village to fetch water. She answers that her trouble is well repaid if only because it enables her to see and thank him for the kindness he has shown to the sufferers; but also adds that the improvident men have allowed oxen and horses to walk into the streams, and so disturb all the water of the village. They pass to the well, and sit upon the wall which protects it. She stoops, and dips a jug in the water; he takes the other jug and dips it also, and they see the image of themselves mirrored in the wavering blue of the reflected heavens, and they nod and greet each other in the friendly mirror. "Let me drink," says the joyous youth. And she holds the jug for him. Then they rest, leaning upon the jugs in sweet confidence.[1]

She then asks him what has brought him here. He looks into her eyes, and feels happy, but dares not trust himself with the avowal. He endeavours to make her understand it in an indirect recital of the need there is at home for a young and active woman to look after the house and his parents. She thinks

[1] I cannot resist quoting the original of this charming picture:

"Also sprach sie, und war die breiten Stufen hinunter
Mit dem Begleiter gelangt; und auf das Mäuerchen setzten
Beide sich nieder des Quells. Sie beugte sich über, zu schöpfen;
Und er fasste den andern Krug, und beugte sich über.
Und sie sahen gespiegelt ihr Bild in der Bläue des Himmels
Schwanken, und nickten sich zu, und grüssten sich freundlich im Spiegel.
Lass mich trinken, sagte darauf der heitere Jüngling;
Und sie riecht' ihm den Krug. Dann ruhten sie Beide, vertraulich
Auf die Gefässe gelehnt."

he means to ask her to come as servant in his house, and, being alone in the world, gladly consents. When he perceives her mistake, he is afraid to undeceive her, and thinks it better to take her home and gain her affection there. "But let us go," she exclaims, "girls are always blamed who stay long at the fountain in gossip." They stand up, and once more look back into the well to see their images meeting in its water, and "sweet desires possess them."

He accompanies her to the village, and witnesses, in the affection all bear to Dorothea, the best sign that his heart has judged aright. She takes leave of them all, and sets forth with Hermann, followed by the blessings and handkerchief-wavings of the emigrants. In silence they walk toward the setting sun, which tinges the storm-clouds threatening in the distance. On the way she asks him to describe the characters of those she is going to serve. He sketches father and mother. "And how am I to treat you, you the only son to my future master?" she asks. By this time they have reached the pear-tree, and the moon is shining overhead. He takes her hand, answering, "Ask your heart, and follow all it tells you." But he can go no farther in his declaration, fearing to draw upon himself a refusal. In silence they sit awhile and look upon the moon. She sees a window — it is Hermann's, who hopes it will soon be hers. They rise to continue their course, her foot slips, she falls into his arms; breast against breast, cheek against cheek, they remain a moment, he not daring to press her to him, merely supporting her. In a few minutes more they enter the house.

The charm of these cantos, as indeed of the whole poem, cannot of course be divined from the analysis I am making; the perfume of a violet is not to be found in the description of the violet. But with all drawbacks, the analysis enables a reader of imagination

to form a better conception of the poem than he would form from an æsthetical discussion such as philosophical criticism indulges in. With this caveat let our analysis proceed. The mother is uneasy at this long absence of Hermann; comes in and out, noting the appearances of the storm, and is rather sharp in her blame of the two friends for leaving him without securing the maiden. The apothecary narrates how he was taught patience in youth; and, the door opening, presents the young couple to their glad eyes. Hermann introduces her, but tells the pastor aside that as yet there has been no talk of marriage; she only supposes her place to be that of servant. The host, wishing to be gallant, goes at once to the point, treats her as his daughter, and compliments her on her taste in having chosen his son. She blushes, is pained, and replies with some reproach that for such a greeting she was unprepared. With tears in her eyes she paints her forlorn condition, and the secret escapes her, that, touched by Hermann's generosity and noble bearing, she really has begun to feel the love for him they twit her with; but having made that confession, of course she can no longer stay; and she is departing with grief in her heart when the mistake is cleared up; she is accepted, dowerless, by them all, and Hermann, in pressing her to his heart, feels prepared for the noble struggle of life.

Such is the story of "Hermann und Dorothea," which is written in Homeric hexameters, with Homeric simplicity. In the ordinary course of things, I should be called upon to give some verdict on the much-vexed question as to whether, properly speaking, this poem is an Epic or an Idyll, or, by way of compromise, an Idyllic Epic. The critics are copious in distinctions and classifications. They tell us in what consists the Epos proper, which they distinguish from the Romantic Epos, and from the Bourgeois Epos; and then these

heavy batteries are brought to bear on "Hermann und Dorothea." Well! if these discussions gratify the mind, and further any of the purposes of Literature, let those, whose bent lies that way, occupy themselves therewith. To me it seems idle to trouble oneself whether "Hermann und Dorothea" is or is not an Epic, or what kind of Epic it should be called. It is a poem. One cannot say more for it. If it is unlike all other poems, there is no harm in that; if it resembles some other poems, the resemblance does not enhance its charm. Let us accept it for what it is, a poem full of life, character, and beauty; simple in its materials, astonishingly simple in its handling; written in obvious imitation of Homer, and yet preserving throughout the most modern colour and sentiment. Of all Idylls, it is the most truly idyllic. Of all poems describing country life and country people, it is the most truthful; and on comparing it with Theocritus or Virgil, with Guarini or Tasso, with Florian or Delille, with Gesner or Thomson, the critic will note with interest its absence of poetic ornamentation, its freedom from all "idealisation." Its peasants are not such as have been fashioned in Dresden china, or have solicited the palette of Lancret and Watteau; but are as true as poetry can represent them. The characters are wonderfully drawn, with a few decisive, unobtrusive touches. Shakespeare himself is not more dramatic in the presentation of character. The host, his wife, the pastor, the old cautious apothecary, stand before us in all their humours. Hermann, the stalwart peasant, frank, simple, and shy, and Dorothea, the healthy, affectionate, robust, simple peasant-girl, are ideal characters in the best sense, viz., in the purity of nature. Those "ideal peasants," with Grecian features and irreproachable linen, so loved of bad painters and poor poets, were not at all the figures Goethe cared to draw; he had faith in nature, which would not allow him to idealise.

Very noteworthy is it that he, like Walter Scott, could find a real pleasure in talking with the common people, such as astonished his daughter-in-law (from whom, among others, I learned the fact), who could not comprehend what pleasure this great intellect found in conversation with an old woman baking her bread, or an old carpenter planing a fir-plank. He would talk with his coachman, pointing out to him the peculiarities of the scenery, and delighting in his remarks. Stately and silent as he often was to travelling bores, and to literary men with no ideas beyond the circle of books, he was loquacious and interested whenever one of the people came in his way; and the secret of this was his abiding interest in every individuality. A carpenter, who was a carpenter, interested him; but the carpenter in Sunday clothes, aping the bourgeois, would have found him as silent and stately as every other pretender found him. What Scott gathered from his intercourse with the people, every one knows who has noticed the rich soil of humour on which Scott's antiquarian fancies are planted; what Goethe gathered from the same source may be read in most of his works, especially in "Hermann und Dorothea," "Faust," and "Wilhelm Meister."

Great objective truth is noticeable in his delineation of the scenes. They are not rhetorically or metaphorically described, they are presented directly to us. Instead of saying what they are like, he says what they *are*. Hence the poem is especially adapted to simple popular tastes, more so, indeed, than to the taste of the *mis*-cultivated class which has allowed critical dissertations to overlay direct impressions, and has learned to believe that prosaic critics know more about poetry, and the means of poetical effect, than the writers of great poems. It is very noticeable that while "Hermann und Dorothea" was rapidly reprinted on the coarsest paper at the lowest prices to take its

place among the books for the people, the so-called cultivated readers only saw in it an imitation of Voss's "Luise," and not a very felicitous imitation. I am sorry to say there are still such readers, who mistake the simplicity for baldness, who miss the "imagery" they have been taught to expect in a poem, and who cannot feel interested in characters so ordinary and in events so unromantic.

As I do not enter upon the discussion of whether the poem is or is not an Epic, I may leave undisturbed all the derivative questions respecting the absence of *similes*, *episodes*, and *supernatural machinery* — which the critics assure us are indispensable to the Epic — as also the other subsidiary matters of action, time, and space. By so doing the bulk of this chapter is materially diminished and the reader not materially impoverished. Two points only require notice, and these shall be briefly touched.

First of the subject-matter. Taken from the sad experience of the hour, moving amid scenes made desolate by the French Revolution, it was natural that something of political significance should be sought in this story. Schiller would undoubtedly have made it the vehicle of splendid eloquence on Freedom, such as would have made the pulses beat. But that was nowise Goethe's tendency. He told Meyer that he had endeavoured "in an epic crucible to free from its dross the pure human existence of a small German town, and at the same time mirror in a small glass the great movements and changes of the world's stage."[1] While leaving to others the political problem, he confined himself as usual to the purely human and individual interest. Instead of declamations on Freedom, he tried to teach men to be free; and by Freedom he meant the complete healthy development of their own

[1] "Briefe an und von Goethe."

natures, not a change of political institutions. In one of the "Xenien" he says:

"Zur Nation euch zu bilden, ihr hoffet es, Deutsche, vergebens.
Bildet, ihr könnt es, dafür freier zu Menschen euch aus."[1]

And in this sense "Hermann und Dorothea" may be accepted as a Hymn to the Family, a solemn vindication of the eternal claims which, as a first necessity, should occupy men.

With regard to the second point, that namely of style, Schiller's cordial praise, in a letter to Meyer, may here find place. "Nor have we in the meantime been inactive, as you know, and least of all our friend, who in the last few years has really surpassed himself. His epic poem you have read; you will admit that it is the pinnacle of his and all our modern art. I have seen it grow up, and have wondered almost as much at the manner of its growth as at the completed work. Whilst the rest of us are obliged painfully to collect and to prune, in order slowly to bring forth anything passable, he has only gently to shake the tree, in order to have fall to him the most beautiful fruit, ripe and heavy. It is incredible with what ease he now reaps for himself the fruits of a well-bestowed life and a persistent culture; how significant and sure all his steps now are; how the clearness as to himself and as to objects preserves him from every idle effort and beating about. But you have him now yourself, and can satisfy yourself of all this with your own eyes. But you will agree with me in this, that on the summit where he now stands, he ought to think more of bringing the beautiful form he has given himself to

[1] "Germans, you hope in vain to develop yourselves into a nation; strive, therefore, to develop yourselves all the more freely into men."

outward exhibition, than to go out in search of new material: in short, that he now ought to live entirely for poetic execution."

The Homeric form is admirably adapted to this kind of narrative; and Voss had already made it popular by his "Luise." Respecting the style of this poem, I would further beg the reader to compare it with that of the last books of "Wilhelm Meister," composed about the same period, and he will then see Goethe's immense superiority on quitting prose for poetry. None of the faults of his prose are traceable here. The language is as clear as crystal and as simple; the details are all, without exception, significant; not a line could be lopped away without injury. One feels that the invigorating breezes of Ilmenau have roused the poet out of the flaccid moods of prose, and given him all his quiet strength.

Before finally dismissing the poem, it may amuse the reader to have a specimen of that ingenious criticism which delights in interpreting the most obvious facts into profound meanings. Hegel, in his "Æsthetik," and after him Rosenkranz, in his excellent book "Goethe und seine Werke," call attention to the fact that Goethe is far truer in his *German* colouring than Voss, whose "Luise" gave the impulse to this poem. Not having read the "Luise," I am unable to judge of this superiority; but the example cited by these critics is assuredly amusing. Voss, they tell us, makes his people drink copiously of coffee; but, however widespread the custom of coffee-drinking, we must remember that coffee, and the sugar which sweetens it, are not *German;* they come from Arabia and the West Indies; the very cups in which the coffee is drunk are of Chinese origin, not German. We are miles away from Germany. How different in Goethe! His host of the Golden Lion refreshes guests with a glass of wine; and what wine? Rhine wine; the

German wine, *par excellence;* the wine growing on the hill behind his own house! And this Rhine wine, is it not drunk out of green glasses, the genuine German glasses? And upon what do these glasses stand? Upon a tin tray: that is also genuine German!

It would be the merest prosaism to suggest that in "Luise" the pastor drinks coffee, because coffee is habitually drunk in the parsonage; while in "Hermann und Dorothea" the characters drink wine, because they are in the "Golden Lion," and Rhine wine, because they are in the Rhine country; yet to such prosaisms is the British critic reduced in answering the subtleties of German æsthetics.

CHAPTER V.

THE THEATRICAL MANAGER.

It will be briefer, and help to convey a more accurate notion of Goethe's efforts in the direction of the Theatre, if, instead of scattering through this biography a number of isolated details, recording small events in chronological order, I endeavour to present some general view of his managerial efforts.

We have already seen how, on his arrival at Weimar, the court was given to theatrical entertainments, and how eagerly he entered into them. The Theatre was in ruins from the fire of the previous year. Theatres were improvised in the Ettersburg woods, and Tiefurt valley, whereon the gay courtiers "strutted their brief hour" by torchlight, to the accompaniment of horns. Actors were improvised from the court circle. Plays were improvised and sometimes written with elaborate care. The public was the public of private theatricals. All this has been narrated in Book iv. What we have here to do with it is to call attention to the contrast thus presented by the Weimar stage with other German stages, and, above all, with the essential conditions of a stage which is to be anything more than the amusement of a dilettante circle. The drama is essentially a national outgrowth. In Weimar, instead of growing out of a popular tendency, and appealing to the people, it grew out of the idleness of a court, and appealed to dilettantism. The actors, instead of being recruited from runaway clerks, ambitious apprentices,

romantic barbers, and scapegrace students, were princes, noblemen, poets, musicians. Instead of playing to a Public, — that heterogeneous, but in dramatic matters indispensable jury, whose verdicts are in the main always right, — they played to courtiers, whose judgment, even when unfettered, would not have had much value; and it never was unfettered. The consequence may be foreseen. As a court amusement, the Theatre was a pleasant and not profitless recreation; as an influence, it was pernicious. The starting-point was false. Not so can dramatic art flourish; not so are Molières and Shakespeares allowed to manifest their strength. The national coöperation is indispensable. Academies may compile Dictionaries, they cannot create Literature; and Courts may patronise Theatres, they cannot create a Drama. The reason lies deep in the nature of things. Germany has never had a Drama, because she has never had a Stage which could be, or would be national. Lessing knew what was needed, but he had not the power to create it. Schiller early mistook the path, and all his noble strivings were frustrated.

Goethe and Schiller, profoundly in earnest, and profoundly convinced of the great influences to be exercised by the Stage, endeavoured to create a German Drama which should stand high above the miserable productions then vitiating public taste. They aspired to create an Ideal Drama, in which the loftiest forms of Art should be presented. But they made a false step at the outset. Disgusted with the rude productions of the day, and distrusting the instincts of the public, they appealed to the cultivated few. Culture was set above Passion and Humour, Literature above Emotion. The stage was to be literary; which is saying, in other words, that it was not to be popular. Nor did experience enlighten them. During the whole period of their reform, the principal performances were

of the old style. At first a wandering troupe, with a wandering repertory, performed opera, drama, and farce, as best it could, with more real success than High Art could boast. Even when Schiller had ennobled the stage with his masterpieces, the ever-pressing necessity of *amusing* the public forced the manager to give the vulgar appetite its vulgar food.[1] The dramatic problem is: How to unite the demands of an audience, insisting on amusement, with the demands of Art, looking beyond amusement? There are many writers who can amuse, but who reach no higher aim; and there are writers who have lofty aims, but cannot amuse. In the Drama the first class is nearer the mark than the second; but the true dramatist is he who can unite the two. Shakespeare and Molière — to take the greatest examples — are as amusing as they are profound; and they live only because they continue to amuse. "Othello," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," "Tartuffe," "L'Ecole des Femmes," and the "Malade Imaginaire" may be enjoyed by the pit, and by the most cultivated critic. Goethe and Schiller fell into the error which in England, a few years ago, was preached as a gospel by a band of clever writers, who gloried in the title of "Unacted Dramatists;" the error of supposing a magnificent dome could be erected without a basis on our common earth, the error of supposing that a Drama could be more successful as Literature than as the reflection of national life.

It was in 1790 that the Weimar Theatre was rebuilt and reopened. Goethe undertook the direction with powers more absolute than any other director ever had, for he was independent even of success. The court paid all expenses, the Stage was left free for him to make experiments upon. He made them, and they all failed. He superintended rehearsals with great care.

[1] Goethe confesses so much. See "Eckermann," vol. i. p. 305, Oxenford's translation.

Shakespeare's "King John" and "Henry IV.," his own "Gross-Kophta," "Bürgergeneral," "Clavigo," and "Die Geschwister," were produced, but without any great effect, for the actors were mediocre and ill paid, and there was no audience to stimulate actors by enthusiasm and criticism. "On Saturday night," writes Henry Crabb Robinson, "we went to the theatre, where I saw 'Wallenstein's Tod' performed in the presence of the author. Schlegel somewhere says, 'Germany has two national theatres — Vienna with a public of fifty thousand, and Weimar with a public of fifty.' The theatre at this time was unique; its managers were Goethe and Schiller, who exhibited there the works which were to become standards and models of dramatic literature. Schiller had his seat near the ducal box, Goethe an armchair in the centre of the first row in the pit. I found myself here in an elegant apartment, so lightly and classically adorned, and so free and easy in its aspect, that I almost forgot where I was. In the pit the seats are all numbered, each person has his own, and each seat has arms. The single row of boxes is supported by elegant pillars, under which the pit loungers stroll at leisure. The gentlemen go into the pit; when they do not, as courteous cavaliers, wait behind the chairs of their fair friends. The box in front is occupied by the duke and duchess with their suite, of course without the dull formality attending a royal presence at Drury Lane. I beheld Schiller a great part of the evening, leaning over the ducal box and chatting with the family."

There can be no doubt that this absence of a crowd made the evening entertainment pass more like an evening party, but there can also be no doubt that the audience was chilled by the presence of the court, and could rarely be emboldened into rapture, which is the life, the pulse, the stimulus of acting. The pit was

cowed by the court, and the court was cowed by Goethe. His contempt of public opinion was undisguised. "The direction," he wrote to his second in command, "acts according to its own views, and not in the least according to the demands of the public. Once for all, understand that the public must be controlled — *will determinirt seyn.*" To Schiller, who was quite of this opinion, he said: "No one can serve two masters, and of all masters the last that I would select is the public which sits in a German theatre." It is all very well for a poet or a philosopher to scorn the fleeting fashions of the day, and to rely on the verdict of posterity; but the Drama appeals to the public of the day, and while the manager keeps his eye on posterity, the theatre is empty.

"Wer machte denn der Mitwelt Spass?"

"Who is to amuse the present?" asks the sensible Merry Andrew, in the Theatre-Prologue to "Faust." A dramatist appealing to posterity is like an orator hoping to convince the descendants of his audience instead of persuading the listening crowd.

The Weimar audiences might be treated despotically, but they could not be forced into enthusiasm for that which wearied them. They submitted in silence. The riotous gallery and dogged pit of France and England only tolerate the absurdities which delight *them;* they admit no arbiter but their own amusement. An infusion of this rebellious element would have aided Goethe and Schiller in their efforts, by warning them from many a mistake. The Jena students might have supplied this element, had they been more constant visitors and less controlled. The student is by nature and profession a rebel, and the Jena student had this tendency cultivated into a system. To be a roaring swashbuckler, with profound contempt for all *Philis-*

tines, and a vast capacity for beer, was not, indeed, enough to constitute a pure judge of art; but to be young, full of life and impulse, and above all to be independent, were primary qualities in a dramatic audience; and the students brought such qualities into the pit. "Without them," says the worthy Klebe in his description of Weimar, "the house would often be empty. They generally come in the afternoon, and ride or drive back after the play." If they enlivened the theatre, they scandalised the town. Imagination pictures them arriving covered with dust, in garbs of varied and eccentric device, ambitious of appearing as different from "humdrum" citizens as might be: adorned with tower-shaped caps, with motley ornaments of tassel, lace, etc., from under which escape flowing locks quite innocent of comb, which mingle with beard and moustache. Their short jackets are lined with stuffs of different colour. Their legs are cased in riding trousers, the inner sides of which are of leather. In their hands is the famous long whip, which they crack as they pour from the Webicht over the bridge into the town, starting its provincial dulness with an uproar by them called "singing" — a musical entertainment which they vary by insulting the not imposing soldiers, whom they christen "tree-frogs," on account of the green and yellow uniform. They push to the utmost the license and pride of the "Renomist," namely, to be ill-mannered.

When these students poured into the theatre, they carried there something like enthusiasm; but they were controlled by one who had a very mediocre admiration of their wild ways — the Geheimrath Goethe, who was not only Geheimrath and Manager, but their idol.[1] Of him Edward Devrient, in his excellent his-

[1] See Heinrich Schmidt: "Erinnerungen eines weimarischen Veteranen," p. 46, describing the enthusiasm with which he and De Wette and their friends read Goethe's poems, and wrote poems in his praise.

tory of the German stage,[1] says: "He sat in the centre of the pit; his powerful glance governed and directed the circle around him, and bridled the dissatisfied or neutral. On one occasion, when the Jena students, whose arbitrary judgment was very unseasonable to him, expressed their opinion too tumultuously, he rose, demanded silence, and threatened to have the disturbers turned out by the hussars on guard. A similar scene took place in 1802 on the representation of Fr. Schlegel's 'Alarcos,' which appeared to the public too daring an attempt, and the approbation given by the loyal party provoked a loud laugh of opposition. Goethe rose and called out with a voice of thunder: 'Let no one laugh!' At last he went so far as for some time to forbid any audible expression on the part of the public, whether of approval or disapproval. He would suffer no kind of disturbance in what he held to be suitable. Over criticism he kept a tight rein; hearing that Bötticher was writing an essay on his direction of the theatre, he declared that if it appeared he would resign his post; and Bötticher left the article unprinted."

Holding this despotic position toward the public, it may be imagined that he was imperious enough with the actors. Both he and Schiller were of opinion that nothing short of the "brief imperative" was of any use with actors — *denn durch Vernunft und Gefälligkeit ist nichts auszurichten,* said Schiller. Goethe as director would hear of no opposition, would listen to none of the egotistical claims which usually torment managers: he insisted on each doing what was allotted to him. Resistance was at once followed by punishment: he sent the men to the guard-house, and had sentinels placed before the doors of the women, confining them to their rooms. With the leading actors he employed other means: once when Becker refused to

[1] "Geschichte der deutschen Schauspiel-Kunst."

play a small part in "Wallenstein's Lager," Goethe informed him that if he did not undertake the part, he, Goethe, would play it himself — a threat which at once vanquished Becker, who knew it would be fulfilled.

Nevertheless, with all this despotism, he was still the great, high-minded, lovable Goethe, and was reverenced by the actors who were under him. Chancellor von Müller says that "nowhere did he more freely exercise the spell of his imposing presence; rigorous and earnest in his demands, unalterable in his determinations, prompt and delighted to acknowledge every successful attempt, attentive to the smallest as to the greatest, and calling forth in every one his most hidden powers — in a narrow circle, and often with slender means, he accomplished what appeared incredible; his encouraging glance was a rich reward; his kind word an invaluable gift. Every one felt himself greater and more powerful in the place which he had assigned to him, and the stamp of his approbation seemed to be a sort of consecration for life. No one who has not seen and heard with what pious fidelity the veterans of that time of Goethe's and Schiller's cheerful spirited coöperation treasured every recollection of these their heroes; with what transport they dwelt on every detail of their proceedings; and how the mere mention of their names called forth the flash of youthful pleasure from their eyes, can have an idea of the affectionate attachment and enthusiastic veneration those great men inspired."

It appears from Edward Devrient's account that the actors were miserably paid. Even Caroline Jagemann — the duke's mistress — who was prima donna, as well as leading actress, received only six hundred thalers a year, with a retiring pension of three hundred; and six hundred thalers is about one hundred pounds sterling. Moreover, the actors were not allowed

a *congé*, as at other theatres; so that no money could be made by them beyond their salaries.[1] Except to confessed mediocrity, Weimar could scarcely have offered a temptation; nevertheless, the magic names of Goethe and Schiller did attract a few good actors.

The shifts to which the management was forced to have recourse, with so small and insufficient a troupe, may be gathered from this anecdote. The opera of "Die Zauberflöte" was performed, but the Queen of Night was so far advanced in pregnancy, that it was impossible to let her appear in that condition. Another singer was not to be had. In this dilemma Goethe actually made her sing the music behind the scenes, while an actress on the stage pantomimically represented the character.

When the connection between Schiller and Goethe grew closer, the Theatre began to assume a really earnest aspect. With his natural tendency to interest himself in whatever deeply interested his friends, Goethe caught some of Schiller's dramatic enthusiasm, and began to treat the stage as a means of artistic education for the nation. "Don Carlos" was performed; somewhat later "Egmont" was adapted to the stage by Schiller (in a melodramatic style which revealed his love of material effects), and the greatest undertaking of all was achieved, namely, the performance of "Wallenstein." The effect was prodigious, and the Weimar stage seemed really to have achieved something like the establishment of a new and grandiose style of dramatic representation. It was, however, but a flash. The strivings of the two poets were misdirected, as the event soon proved. No drama could so be founded. The dramatic age had passed, and could not be restored — not at least in such forms.

[1] On the various salaries paid to actors at Weimar, see Pasqué: "Goethe's Theaterleitung in Weimar," i.

"The Weimar school," says Devrient,[1] who is here speaking *ex professo*, and is worth attending to, "although it demanded of the artist 'to produce something resembling nature,'[2] nevertheless set up a new standard of nobleness and beauty, by which every phenomenon in the region of art was to be tested. The tendency hitherto dominant had by no means neglected the beautiful, but it had sought only a *beautiful reality*, — now, with subtle distinction, *beautiful truth* was demanded from it. Hitherto *living nature* had served as the standard, now an *enlightened taste* was to be the rule. The actors were to disaccustom themselves to the native German manner, and find a freer, a more universal conception; they were to raise themselves out of the narrow limits of the special, of the individual, to the contemplation of the general, of the Ideal.

"These were astoundingly new and hard demands on the actor. Hitherto a plain understanding, with vivid and sensitive feelings, had tolerably well sufficed to make this natural talent tell; for the problems lay within the actor's circle of vision. Now, appeal was principally made to his taste; he was required to have a refined instinct, and ennobled sentiments, which, to a certain degree, presupposed scientific and antiquarian culture; for, instead of *nature*, as hitherto, the antique was now the model of speech and feature. The actual culture of the histrionic class was not in the remotest degree adequate to these demands; what then was to be done? The Weimar school must content itself with *training*: it must seek to supply by external drilling what ought properly to have proceeded from a higher intellectual life, from an intrinsically ennobled nature. Nothing else remained to it. The spirit of our literature was pressing forward with unexampled

[1] "Geschichte der deutschen Schauspiel-Kunst," p. 255.
[2] "Goethe's Vorrede zu den Propyläen."

power to that summit on which it could from thenceforth measure itself with that of all other nations; it carried along with it theatrical art, such as it was. If the attempt had been made to advance the culture of actors as far as was necessary in order to bring it even with the victorious march of our literature, the moment would have been lost in which the Stage could render immeasurable service to the national culture.

"Goethe and Schiller had essentially this mission: to elevate poetry; to carry the intellectual life of the nation into higher ideal regions; literature was their *immediate* object, the stage only a secondary one; nay, it was with them only a means to an end. To work with entire devotion to dramatic art, solely for it and through it, as Molière and Shakespeare did, never occurred to them; nor would they imitate Lessing, who attached himself closely to art, to what it achieved, and could achieve. They placed themselves and their poems on the standpoint of the independent *literary* drama. The old schism between the *genres* again presented itself; the scholarly in opposition to the popular drama; and poetic art again won the supremacy over dramatic. 'Don Carlos' and 'Wallenstein' were not conceived for the actual stage, and could only be adapted to it with great labour and sacrifice; in writing 'Faust,' 'Tasso,' and the 'Natürliche Tochter,' Goethe did not contemplate their representation, which must be considered purely as a theatrical experiment. It was a natural consequence that, since the two great poets adapted their works to the theatre just as it was, and were by no means excessively fastidious in their mode of doing it, they, with the same sort of violence, pushed forward the art of representation, and here also had to content themselves with what could be achieved by merely external discipline. Dramatic art had not reached that point of cul-

ture which could prepare it perfectly to comprehend and master their poems, and reproduce them independently. . . . Now if this new school was to make its authority in taste acknowledged, that authority must necessarily be exercised with a certain despotism. With despotism toward the actors and the public, since both were deeply imbued with naturalism. Like the unfortunate Neuber, like Schroeder in his eightieth year, Schiller and Goethe placed themselves in decided opposition to the taste of the majority. They maintained a thoroughly aristocratic position with respect to the public, and defended the ideal principle with all the power of their preëminent genius; nay, they did not scorn to attack the prevalent taste with the sharpest weapons of satire. Their correspondence exhibits their contempt for the masses, and for the champions of the popular taste, in all that rudeness which seems inseparable from the enthusiasm of great souls for a more exalted humanity. Nowhere did they sue for the approbation of the multitude; nowhere did they accommodate themselves to the ruling taste, or even flatter it.

"The despotic energy with which Goethe carried out the ideal principle, in spite of all difficulties, necessarily made itself felt in his direction of the theatre. He had to urge forward dramatic art, and to wring from the public a formal respect for the experiments of his school; a double task, which obliged him to surpass even Schroeder in the peremptoriness of his commands."

Not only were there difficulties of rhythm, but also of pronunciation, to be overcome. The German language, harsh as it is at the best, becomes hideous in the careless licenses of pronunciation which various cities and classes adopt — as people who are too ugly to hope for any admiration come at last entirely to neglect their appearance. The Suabians, Austrians, and especially the Weimarians, plagued Goethe terribly

with their peculiarities of speech. "One would scarcely believe that *b*, *p*, *d*, and *t* are generally considered to be *four* different letters," said the poet to Eckermann, "for they only speak of a hard and a soft *b*, and of a hard and a soft *d*, and thus seem tacitly to intimate that *p* and *t* do not exist.[1] With such people *Pein* (pain) is like *Bein* (leg), *Pass* (pass) like *Bass* (bass), and *Teckel* (a terrier) like *Deckel* (cover)." Thus an actor in an impassioned moment bidding his mistress cease her reproaches, exclaimed *O ente* (Oh, duck!) meaning *O ende* (Oh, cease!).

The success of "Wallenstein," which was a theatrical no less than an artistic success, seemed to have decided the battle in favour of the Ideal school; seemed, but did not. Art was henceforth to be everything. So far did Goethe carry out his principle of placing Art foremost,[2] that he would not suffer the actors to forget the audience; his maxim was, that in a scene between two actors, the presence of the spectator should constantly be felt. Consequently the actors were not allowed to stand in profile, or to turn their backs upon the audience, or to speak at the back of the stage, under any pretext. They were to *recite*, not to *be* the characters represented. Heinrich Schmidt narrates how Goethe, in giving him lessons in acting, entered into the minutest details. In the celebrated monologue of Hamlet, "To be or not to be," he allowed Schmidt to place his right hand upon his chin, while the left hand supported the right elbow; but would not permit this left hand to be closed like a fist, insisting that the two middle fingers should be held together, the thumb and the other two fingers kept apart.[3] In acting, he reversed

[1] Ludecus in his book, "Aus Goethe's Leben: Wahrheit und keine Dichtung," tells a story of Graf, Schiller's favourite actor, who, on seeing the great Talma, exclaimed, "*Dalma ist ein Gott!*"

[2] See his "Rules for Actors." — *Werke*, xxxv. pp. 435–459.

[3] "Erinnerungen," p. 110.

his old artistic maxim, and insisted on Beauty first, Truth afterward: *erst schön, dann wahr.*[1]

It will surprise no one that this tendency, this preoccupation with the Ideal, should result in the rehabilitation of the most perfect form of drama, which that tendency has produced — I mean the French Tragedy, so pitilessly ridiculed by Lessing. Nay, Goethe himself translated Voltaire's "Mahomet," which was played in 1800, and afterward "Tancred." The "Adelphi" of Terence, translated by Einsiedel; the "Ion" of Schlegel; the "Phèdre" of Racine, translated by Schiller; and finally Schiller's own "Braut von Messina," sufficiently show the wide departure from anything like a modern national drama into which the Weimar school had wandered. Nay, even Shakespeare had to suffer the indignity of being elevated by this classical mania. Schiller translated his "Macbeth" — how he travestied it may be seen by the curious reader; enough to mention here that he changes the Witches into Fates; and we learn from Heinrich Voss that these terrible sisters were represented by young girls beautifully dressed! We need not, therefore, be surprised on hearing that Terence's comedy was actually represented by actors in Roman Masks, — thus entirely getting rid of Expression, which forms the basis of modern acting. So deplorable a mistake needs only to be mentioned to be appreciated. One step alone remained for dilettantism; and that step was to give the actors the cothurnus, and make them spout Latin and Greek.

During these antique restorations, experiments were made with Shakespeare, Calderon, Gozzi — with everything but the life of the people — and Weimar was

[1] Remnants of the old Weimar school still talk of these days, and of the drilling which it was necessary to give the actors. From one, to whom Goethe was very kind, I heard full confirmation of what is said in the text.

proclaimed a great school of Art, in which the *literary* public religiously believed. But the other public? Goethe himself shall answer. "Here in Weimar they have done me the honour to perform my 'Iphigenia' and my 'Tasso,'" he said to Eckermann in his old age. "But how often? Scarcely once in three or four years. The public finds them tedious. Very probably. . . . I really had the notion once that it was possible to found a German Drama; but there was no emotion or excitement — all remained as it was before."

To found a German Drama by means of poetic works and antique restorations, was the delusion of one who was essentially *not* a dramatist. I have more than once denied to Goethe the peculiar genius which makes the dramatist; and my denial is not only supported by the evidence of his own works; it is, I think, conclusively established by his critical reflections on Shakespeare, and his theatrical treatment of Shakespeare's works. Profoundly as he appreciated the poet, he seems to me wholly to have misunderstood the dramatist. He actually asserts that Hamlet's Ghost, and the witches in "Macbeth," are examples of Shakespeare's "representing what would better be imagined;" that in the reading, these figures are acceptable, but in the acting they disturb, nay repel, our emotion. So radical a misconception need not be dwelt on. The reader, who does not at once perceive it, may rest assured that he is wholly unacquainted with the secrets of dramatic art. As an example of Goethe's entire misunderstanding of Shakespeare's art, I will cite the version he made of "Romeo and Juliet," of which he was not a little proud. The subject is of sufficient literary interest — considering the two names implicated — to warrant a digression.

It was in 1811 that he undertook to recast "Romeo and Juliet" for the stage; and as this version has

recently been recovered, and printed by Boas,[1] we can examine it at leisure. There is scarcely any Shakespearian play which a great poet and dramatist might so reasonably undertake to recast as "Romeo and Juliet;" for while it is instinct with life, character, and dramatic movement, it is in some respects among the worst of Shakespeare's fine plays. Juvenility of style is apparent in almost every scene. The frequence of rhyme, the forced rhetoric and conceits, the lame expression, and the deficiency in that passionate and profound poetry which illuminates the great plays, prove it to be an early work. In most of the great situations we find long tirades of rhetorical *concetti* in place of the nervous language, strongly coloured by passion, which Shakespeare afterward knew so well how to employ. Thus when Juliet is in the agony of suspense as to whether Romeo is dead, she says:

> "This torture should be roared in dismal hell,
> Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but *I*,
> And that bare vowel, *I*, shall poison more
> Than the death-darting *eye* of cockatrice:
> I am not I, if there be such an *I*."

There are critics who will defend this (what will they not defend in Shakespeare?) and find plausible arguments to show that it is true passion; but I do not advise any modern poet to write thus if he would win the admiration of these critics.

It is the work of Shakespeare *young*, but indisputably Shakespeare. He has not only presented the story with wonderful vividness and variety, but he has crowded it with *characters*, and animated those characters with true dramatic motives. Think of old Capulet, Tybalt, the Nurse, Peter, Gregory and Sampson, and the Apothecary, — all episodical figures, yet each having his well-marked individuality. By touches

[1] "Nachträge zu Goethe's Werken."

brief yet free and masterly the figures stand out from the canvas.

One would imagine that a dramatist who undertook to remedy the defects of this work would throw all his labour into those parts where the work is weakest, and thus free the rich harvest of dramatic thought from all the chaff and stubble; one would certainly never expect him to remove any of those vivid touches which give life to the characters, or any of those dramatic presentations of the subject which animate the scene. Yet this, and this only, has Goethe done.[1]

Shakespeare opens with one of his lifelike expositions, pregnant with purpose, and arresting attention at the outset. The Capulet servants are swaggering in the streets of Verona, and no sooner do they meet the servants of the Montagues than at once they come to blows. Tybalt and Benvolio quickly join in the fray; old Capulet and old Montague are not long behind. The whole feud of the two houses — that which forms the *nodus* of the piece — lives before us. The entrance of the Prince, threatening death to the man who next disturbs the peace of Verona, introduces another tragic motive. The whole exposition is a masterly specimen of dramatic art. But Goethe had so little sense of what was dramatic, that he strikes out this exposition, and opens his version like a comic opera, with a chorus of servants who are arranging lamps and garlands before Capulet's house:

> "Zündet die Lampen an,
> Windet auch Kränze dran,
> Hell sey das Haus!"
> etc., etc.

[1] In a letter to Frau von Wolzogen, he speaks of his recently completed version thus: "The maxim which I followed was to concentrate all that was most interesting, and bring it into harmony; for Shakespeare, following the bent of his genius, his time, and his public, was forced to bring together much that was not harmonious, to flatter the reigning taste." ("Literarischer Nachlass der Frau von Wolzogen," vol. i. p. 437.)

Maskers pass into the house. Romeo and Benvolio enter and *talk*. They *tell* us of that family feud, which Shakespeare made us *see*. Rosalind is alluded to by Romeo, but all the fantastic hyperbole of desire which Shakespeare's Romeo expresses (in direct contrast with the expression of his *passion* for Juliet) is struck out. The two enter Capulet's house, where Benvolio promises to show him a lovelier face than Rosalind's. Before they enter, however, Mercutio arrives; and at this point the student of Shakespeare will uplift his eyebrows when he sees how Goethe has contrived to destroy this poetic creation. Not only is the celebrated Mab speech omitted, but Mercutio declares he will keep out of the ballroom, lest he should be discovered — by his handsome figure! The whole of this must be translated, or my readers may withhold their credence.

"*Romeo.* Come with us.
Get you a mantle, get a stranger's mask.
Mercutio. In vain I don the mask, it helps me not.
I'm known by every child, and must be known.
I am a distinguished man; there is a character in my figure and voice, in my walk, in my every movement.
Benvolio. Truly! thy paunch has a charming look.
Mercutio. It is easy for you to talk — toothpicks, beanstalks as you are! You hang rag after rag upon you: who will unpack you? But I with the heaviest mantle, with the most outrageous nose, I have only to appear, and some one directly whispers behind, 'There goes Mercutio! By my faith, it is Mercutio!' That indeed would be immensely vexatious were it no glory. And since I am Mercutio, let me be Mercutio, and always Mercutio! Now, good-bye to you. Do your business as well as you can, I seek my adventures on my pillow. An airy dream shall delight me, while you run after your dreams, and can no more catch them than I can.
I shall be brisk when o'er you weeps the dawn,
While you for weariness, or love, will yawn. [*Exit.*"

Into *this* has Mercutio been metamorphosed! The ball scene follows. The Nurse, indeed, is introduced, but

all her individuality is destroyed; every one of the characteristic touches is washed out by an unsparing sponge. In his essay on Shakespeare he gives us the clue to these omissions; for he says "that the Nurse and Mercutio almost entirely destroy the tragic meaning of the story, and are to be regarded as farcical additions, which the modern stage repudiates."[1] The alterations in this scene are not important, and are chiefly the presence of the Prince, who comes to the ball with Mercutio, his object being to mix in the society of Capulet and Montague, and so bring about amity between the houses. The old feud is again *talked* of: as if talking could take the place of doing! The rest of the piece follows the original pretty closely; there are only two alterations which call for notice; one an improvement, and one an extraordinary and inexplicable blunder.

To begin with the blunder: The reader knows with what sharpness Shakespeare has contrasted the calm, respectable Paris, who wooes Juliet through her parents, and the fervid Romeo, who goes direct to Juliet herself; one seeks the father's consent, without troubling himself about the maid; the other seeks the maid's consent, and braves the enmity of the father. What will the reader think of Goethe's dramatic ideas, on hearing that this contrast is entirely effaced; Paris makes love to Juliet; has long adored her in silence, before he ventured to ask her parent's consent!

The second alteration is a dramatic improvement; although it will certainly make the Shakespeare bigots cry out. It is the closing of the piece with Juliet's death, the Friar in a short soliloquy pointing the moral. Nothing can be more undramatic or more tiresome than the long recapitulation of facts perfectly familiar to the audience, with which Shakespeare ends the piece.

[1] "Werke," xxxv. 379.

This "Romeo and Juliet" was not only produced at Weimar, but it kept the stage in Berlin until within the last few years! The Berlin critics on its original production were by no means favourably inclined to it — the dénouement, we learn from Zelter, especially displeased them. Did they resent being robbed of their *ennui?*

Enough has been said to characterise the attempt of Goethe and Schiller to create a German Drama; which attempt, although its failure was inevitable, cannot be regarded without sympathy, were it only for the noble aim animating it. That aim was misdirected; but it was the error of lofty minds, who saw *above* the exigencies of the age. They could not bring themselves to believe that the Drama, which they held to be so grand a form of Art, had ceased to be the lay-pulpit, and had become a mere amusement.

With Schiller's death Goethe's active interest in the theatre ceased. The Obermarschall Graf von Edeling was adjoined to him, as acting superintendent, but without absolute power, which still remained in Goethe's hands. This was toward the end of 1813. And in 1817 his son, August von Goethe, was added to the direction. Thus was the theatre burdened with a Geheimrath, absolute but inactive, an Obermarschall, and a court page. Nor were matters better behind the scenes. An intrigue had long been forming, under the direction of Caroline Jagemann, to force Goethe's resignation. Between the duke's mistress and the duke's friend there had never been a very pleasant feeling. She was naturally jealous of Goethe's power. As an actress under his direction, she must have had endless little causes of complaint. Had the poet been less firmly fixed in the duke's affections and interests, this rivalry could not have endured so long. At last a crisis came.

There was at that period, 1817, a comedian named

Karsten, whose poodle performed the leading part in the well-known melodrame of "The Dog of Montargis" with such perfection that he carried the public everywhere with him, in Paris as in Germany. It may be imagined with what sorrowing scorn Goethe heard of this. The dramatic art to give place to a poodle! He, who detested dogs, to hear of a dog performing on all the stages of Germany with greater success than the best of actors! The occasion was not one to be lost. The duke, whose fondness for dogs was as marked as Goethe's aversion to them, was craftily assailed, from various sides, to invite Karsten and his poodle to Weimar. When Goethe heard of this he haughtily answered, "In our theatre regulation stands: *no dogs admitted on the stage*" — and paid no more attention to it. As the duke had already written to invite Karsten and his dog, Goethe's opposition was set down to systematic arbitrariness, and people artfully "wondered" how a prince's wishes could be opposed for such trifles. The dog came. After the first rehearsal, Goethe declared that he would have nothing more to do with a theatre on which a dog was allowed to perform; and at once started for Jena. Princes ill brook opposition; and the duke, after all, was a duke. In an unworthy moment, he wrote the following, which was posted in the theatre, and forwarded to Goethe:

"From the expressed opinions which have reached me, I have come to the conviction that the Herr Geheimrath von Goethe wishes to be released from his functions as Intendant, which I hereby accord.

"KARL AUGUST."

A more offensive dismissal could scarcely have been suggested by malice. In the duke it was only a spurt of the imperious temper and coarseness which roughened his fine qualities. On Goethe the blow fell heavily.

"Karl August never understood me," he exclaimed, with a deep sigh. Such an insult to the greatest man of his age, coming from his old friend and brother in arms, who had been more friend than monarch to him during two and forty years, and who had declared that one grave should hold their bodies — and all about a dog, behind which was a miserable greenroom cabal! The thought of leaving Weimar for ever, and of accepting the magnificent offers made him from Vienna, pressed urgently on his mind.

But to his credit be it said, the duke quickly became sensible of his unworthy outbreak of temper, and wrote to Goethe in a tone of conciliation. "Dear friend," he wrote, "From several expressions thou hast let fall, I gather that thou wouldst be pleased to be released from the vexations of theatrical management, but that thou wouldst willingly aid it by thy counsel and countenance when, as will doubtless often be the case, thou art specially appealed to by the manager. I gladly fall in with thy desire, thanking thee for the great good thou hast effected in this troublesome business, begging thee to retain thy interest in its artistic prosperity, and hoping that the release will better thy health. I enclose an official letter notifying this change, and with best wishes for your health, etc." The cloud passed over; but no entreaty could make Goethe resume the direction of the theatre, and he withdrew his son also from his post in the direction. He could pardon the hasty act and unconsidered word of his friend; but he was prouder than the duke, and held firmly to his resolution of having nothing to do with a theatre which had once prostituted itself to the exhibition of a clever poodle.

What a sarcasm, and in the sarcasm what a moral, lies in this story. Art, which Weimar will not have, gives place to a poodle!

CHAPTER VI.

SCHILLER'S LAST YEARS.

THE current of narrative in the preceding chapter has flowed onwards into years and events from which we must now return. Instead of the year 1817, we must recall the year 1800. Schiller has just come to settle at Weimar, there to end his days in noble work with his great friend. It may interest the reader to have a glimpse of Goethe's daily routine; the more so, as such a glimpse is not to be had from any published works.

He rose at seven, sometimes earlier, after a sound and prolonged sleep; for, like Thorwaldsen, he had a "talent for sleeping," only surpassed by his talent for continuous work. Till eleven he worked without interruption. A cup of chocolate was then brought, and he resumed work till one. At two he dined. This meal was the important meal of the day. His appetite was immense. Even on the days when he complained of not being hungry, he ate much more than most men. Puddings, sweets, and cakes were always welcome. He sat a long while over his wine, chatting gaily to some friend or other (for he never dined alone), or to one of the actors, whom he often had with him, after dinner, to read over their parts, and to take his instructions. He was fond of wine, and drank daily his two or three bottles.

Lest this statement should convey a false impression, I hasten to recall to the reader's recollection the habits

of our fathers in respect of drinking. It was no unusual thing to be a "three-bottle" man in those days in England, when the three bottles were of Port or Burgundy; and Goethe, a Rhinelander, accustomed from boyhood to wine, drank a wine which his English contemporaries would have called water. The amount he drank never did more than exhilarate him; never made him unfit for work or for society.[1]

Over his wine he sat some hours: no such thing as dessert was seen upon his table in those days; not even the customary coffee after dinner. His mode of living was extremely simple; and even when persons of very modest circumstances burned wax, two poor tallow candles were all that could be seen in his rooms. In the evening he went often to the theatre, and there his customary glass of punch was brought at six o'clock. When he was not at the theatre, he received friends at home. Between eight and nine a frugal supper was laid, but he never ate anything except a little salad or preserves. By ten o'clock he was usually in bed.

Many visitors came to him. From the letters of Christiane to Meyer we gather that he must have exercised hospitality on a large scale, since about every month fifty pounds of butter are ordered from Bremen, and the cases of wine have frequently to be renewed. It was the pleasure and the penalty of his fame, that all persons who came near Weimar made an effort to see him. Sometimes these visitors were persons of great interest; oftener they were fatiguing bores, or

[1] "For the last thousand years, the life of the Rhinelander is as it were steeped in wine; he has become like the good old wine-casks, tinted with the vinous green. Wine is the creed of the Rhinelander in everything. As in England, in the days of Cromwell, the Royalists were known by their meat pasties, the Papists by their raisin soup, the Atheists by their roast beef; so is the man of the Rhinegau known by his wine-flask. A jolly companion drinks his seven bottles every day, and with it grows as old as Methuselah, is seldom drunk, and has at most the Bardolph mark of a red nose." (Liebig: "Letters on Chemistry." Appendix.)

men with pretensions more offensive than dulness. To those who pleased him he was inexpressibly charming; to the others he was stately, even to stiffness. While, therefore, we hear some speak of him with an enthusiasm such as genius alone can excite, we hear others giving vent to the feelings of disappointment, and even of offence, created by his manners. The stately minister exasperated those who went to see the impassioned poet. As these visitors were frequently authors, it was natural they should avenge their wounded self-love in criticisms and epigrams. To cite but one example among many: Bürger, whom Goethe had assisted in a pecuniary way, came to Weimar, and announced himself in this preposterous style: "You are Goethe — I am Bürger," evidently believing he was thereby maintaining his own greatness, and offering a brotherly alliance. Goethe receives him with the most diplomatic politeness and the most diplomatic formality; instead of plunging into discussions of poetry, he would be brought to talk of nothing but the condition of the Göttingen University, and the number of its students. Bürger went away furious, avenged this reception in an epigram, and related to all comers the experience he had had of the proud, cold, diplomatic Geheimrath. Others had the like experience to recount; and a public, ever greedy of scandal, ever willing to believe a great man is a small man, echoed these voices in swelling chorus. Something of offence lay in the very nature of Goethe's bearing, which was stiff, even to haughtiness. His appearance was so imposing, that Heine humourously relates how, on the occasion of his first interview with him, an elaborately prepared speech was entirely driven from his memory by the Jupiter-like presence, and he could only stammer forth "a remark on the excellence of the plums which grew on the road from Jena to Weimar." An imposing presence is irritating

to mean natures; and Goethe might have gained universal applause, if, like Jean Paul, he had worn no cravat, and had let his hair hang loose upon his shoulders.

The mention of Jean Paul leads me to quote *his* impression of Goethe: "I went timidly to meet him. Every one had described him as cold to everything upon earth. Frau von Kalb said he no longer admires anything, not even himself. Every word is ice. Nothing but curiosities warm the fibres of his heart; so I asked Knebel if he could petrify me, or encrust me in some mineral spring, that I might present myself as a statue or a fossil." How one hears the accents of village gossip in these sentences! To Weimarian ignorance Goethe's enthusiasm for statues and natural products seemed monstrous. "His house," Jean Paul continues, "or rather his palace, pleased me; it is the only one in Weimar in the Italian style; with such a staircase! A Pantheon full of pictures and statues. Fresh anxiety oppressed me. At last the god entered, cold, monosyllabic. 'The French are drawing toward Paris,' said Knebel. 'Hm!' said the god. His face is massive and animated; his eye a ball of light! At last, as conversation turned on art, he warmed, and was himself. His conversation was not so rich and flowing as Herder's, but penetrating, acute, and calm. Finally, he read, or rather performed, an unpublished poem, in which the flames of his heart burst through the external crust of ice; so that he greeted my enthusiasm with a pressure of the hand. He did it again as I took leave, and urged me to call. By heaven! we shall love each other! He considers his poetic career closed. There is nothing comparable to his reading. It is like deep-toned thunder, blended with whispering rain-drops."

Now let us hear what Jean Paul says of Schiller: "I went yesterday to see the stony Schiller, from

whom all strangers spring back as from a precipice. His form is wasted, yet severely powerful, and very angular. He is full of acumen, but without love. His conversation is as excellent as his writings." He never repeated this visit to Schiller, who doubtless quite subscribed to what Goethe wrote: "I am glad you have seen Richter. His love of truth, and his wish for self-improvement, have prepossessed me in his favour; but the social man is a sort of theoretical man, and I doubt if he will approach us in a practical way."

If to pretenders and to *strangers* Goethe was cold and repellent, he was warm and attractive enough to all with whom he could sympathise. Brotherly to Schiller and Herder, he was fatherly in his loving discernment and protection to such men as Hegel, then an unknown teacher, and Voss, the son of the translator of Homer.[1] He excited passionate attachments in all who lived in his intimacy; and passionate hatred in many whom he would not admit to intimacy.

The opening of this century found Schiller active, and anxious to stimulate the activity of his friend. But theories hampered the genius of Goethe; and various occupations disturbed it. He was not, like Schiller, a reflective, critical poet, but a spontaneous, instinctive poet. The consequence was, that Reflection not only retarded, but misled him into Symbolism — the dark corner of that otherwise sunny palace of Art which he has reared. He took up "Faust," and wrote the classic intermezzo of "Helena." He was very busy with the theatre, and with science; and at the close of the year fell into a dangerous illness, which created much anxiety in the duke and the Weimar circle, and of which the Frau von Stein wrote in that letter quoted p. 61. He recovered in a few

[1] Note Voss's enthusiastic gratitude in his "Mittheilungen über Goethe und Schiller."

weeks, and busied himself with the translation of "Theophrastus on Colours," with "Faust" and the "Natürliche Tochter."

While the two chiefs of Literature were, in noble emulation and brotherly love, working together, each anxious for the success of the other, the nation divided itself into two parties, disputing which was the greater poet of the two; as in Rome the artists dispute about Raphael and Michael Angelo. "It is difficult to appreciate one such genius," says Goethe of the two painters, "still more difficult to appreciate both. Hence people lighten the task by partisanship." The partisanship in the present case was fierce, and has continued. Instead of following Goethe's advice, and rejoicing that it had two such poets to boast of, the public has gone on crying up one at the expense of the other. Schiller himself with charming modesty confessed his inferiority; and in one of his letters to Körner he says: "Compared with Goethe I am but a poetical bungler —*gegen Goethe bin und bleib' ich ein poetischer Lump.*" But the majority have placed him higher than his rival, at least higher in their hearts. Gervinus has remarked a curious contradiction in the fate of their works. Schiller, who wrote for men, is the favourite of women and youths; Goethe, who remained in perpetual youth, is only relished by men. The secret of this is, that Schiller had those passions and enthusiasms which Goethe wanted. Goethe told Eckermann that his works never could be popular; and, except the minor poems and "Faust," there are none of his productions which equal the popularity of Schiller's.

To make an instrument of vengeance out of this partisanship, seemed an excellent idea to Kotzebue, who, after being crowned at Berlin, and saluted all over Germany with tributes of tears, now came to his native city of Weimar. He was invited to court, but he was not admitted into the select Goethe-Schiller

circle; which irritated his vanity the more because a joke of Goethe's had been repeated to him. In Japan, besides the temporal court of the emperor, there is the spiritual court of the Dalai-Lama, which exercises a superior though secret influence. Goethe, alluding to this, said: "It is of no use to Kotzebue that he has been received at the temporal court of Japan, if he cannot get admitted to the spiritual court." Kotzebue thought he could destroy that court, and set up one of his own, of which Schiller should be the Dalai-Lama.

There was at this time a select little circle, composed of Goethe, Schiller, Meyer, and several distinguished women, the Countess von Einsiedel, Fraülein von Imhoff, Frau von Wolzogen, and others. The great preponderance of women in this circle gave a romantic tinge to the laws they imposed on themselves. On Kotzebue's arrival, one of Amalia's maids of honour used her utmost to obtain his admission; but Schiller and Goethe resolved on his exclusion, got a by-law enacted, "that no member should have the power of introducing another person, native or stranger, without the previously expressed unanimous consent of the other members." A certain coolness had sprung up between some of the members of the circle, and Goethe, pestered by the iteration of the request that Kotzebue should be admitted, at last said, "Laws once recognised should be upheld; if not, it would be better to break up the society altogether; which, perhaps, would be the more advisable, as constancy is always difficult, if not tedious, to ladies." The ladies were naturally enough irritated. Kotzebue was ready to inflame them. Schiller had just gone to Leipsic; and Kotzebue, taking advantage of this absence, organised a fête to celebrate the coronation of Frederick Schiller in the Stadthouse of Weimar. Scenes from "Don Carlos," the "Maid of Orleans," and "Maria Stuart"

were to come first. Goethe's favourite, the Countess von Einsiedel (now his foe), was to represent the Joan of Arc; the Fraülein von Imhoff the Queen of Scots; Sophie Moreau was to recite the Song of the Bell. Kotzebue was to appear as Father Thibaut in the "Maid of Orleans" and as the Bell Founder, in which latter character he was to strike the mould of the bell (made of pasteboard), and, breaking it in pieces, disclose the bust of Schiller, which was to be crowned by the ladies. The preparations for this fête were eagerly carried forward. Weimar was in a state of excitement. The cabal looked prosperous. The Princess Caroline had consented to be present. Schiller was most pressingly invited, but said, in Goethe's house, a few days before, "I shall send word I am ill." To this Goethe made no reply. He heard of all the arrangements in perfect silence.

"It was thought," says Falk, to whom we owe this story, "that a coolness between the two great men would spring out of this cabal; especially if the simple, unsuspecting Schiller should fall into the toils laid for him. But they who suspected this, knew not the men. Fortunately, however, the whole scheme fell to pieces. The directors of the Library refused to lend Schiller's bust; the burgomaster refused to lend the Stadthouse. Rarely has so melancholy, so disastrous a day risen on the gay world of Weimar. To see the fairest, most brilliant hopes thus crushed at a blow when so near their fulfilment, what was it but to be wrecked in sight of port? Let the reader but imagine the now utterly useless expenditure of crape, gauze, ribbons, lace, beads, flowers, which the fair creatures had made; not to mention the pasteboard for the bell, the canvas, colours, brushes for the scenes, the wax candles for lighting, etc. Let him think of the still greater outlay of time and trouble requisite for the learning so many and such various parts; let him figure to himself a

majestic Maid of Orleans, a captivating Queen of Scots, a lovely Agnes, so suddenly compelled to descend from the pinnacle of glory, and in evil moment to lay aside the crown and sceptre, helm, dress, and ornament, and he will admit there never was fate more cruel."

Shortly after this — on the 13th June, 1802 — Goethe's son was confirmed. Herder officiated on the occasion; and this brought him once more into that friendly relation with Goethe, which of late had been cooled by his jealousy of Schiller. Herder had been jealous of the growing friendship of Goethe and Merck; he was still more embittered by the growing friendship of Goethe and Schiller. He was bitter against Schiller's idol, Kant, and all Kant's admirers, declaring the new philosophy destructive of Christian morals. He was growing old, and the bitterness of his youth was intensified by age and sickness. Schiller was in every way antagonistic to him; and the performance of "Wallenstein" "made him ill." Goethe, whose marvellous tolerance he had so sorely tried, and who never ceased to admire his fine qualities, said, "One could not go to him without rejoicing in his mildness, one could not quit him without having been hurt by his bitterness." For some time Goethe was never mentioned in the Herder family, except in an almost inimical tone; and yet Herder's wife wrote to Knebel: "Let us thank God that Goethe still lives. Weimar would be intolerable without him." They lived together in Jena for a few days, and parted never to see each other again. In December, 1803, Herder was no more.

While discussing Physical Science with Ritter, Comparative Anatomy with Loder, Optics with Himly, and making observations on the Moon, the plan of a great poem, "De Natura Rerum," rose in Goethe's mind, and, like so many other plans, remained a plan. Intercourse with the great philologist Wolff led him a will-

ing student into Antiquity; and from Voss he tried to master the whole principles of Metre with the zeal of a philologist. There is something very piquant in the idea of the greatest poet of his nation, the most musical master of verse in all possible forms, trying to acquire a theoretic knowledge of that which on instinct he did to perfection. It is characteristic of his new tendency to theorise on poetry.

Whoever reads the "Natürliche Tochter," which was completed at this period, will probably attribute to this theorising tendency the absence of all life and vigour which makes it "marble smooth and marble cold." But although it appears marble cold to us, it was the marble urn in which the poet had buried real feelings; and Abeken relates that the actress who originally performed the Heroine, told him how, on one occasion, when she was rehearsing the part in Goethe's room, he was so overcome with emotion, that with tears in his eyes he bade her pause.[1] This may seem more strange than the fact that Schiller admired the work, and wrote to Humboldt: "The high symbolism with which it is handled, so that all the crude material is neutralised, and everything becomes portion of an ideal Whole, is truly wonderful. It is entirely Art, and thereby reaches the innermost Nature, through the power of truth." And Fichte — who, Varnhagen tells me, was with him in the box at the theatre when the play was performed at Berlin, and was greatly moved by it — declared it to be Goethe's masterpiece. Rosenkranz is amazed at the almost universal condemnation of the work. "What pathos, what warmth, what tragic pain!" he exclaims. Others would echo the exclamation — in irony. It seems to me that the very praise of Schiller and Fichte is a justification of the general verdict. A drama which is *so* praised, *i. e.* for its high symbolism, is a drama philosophers and critics may

[1] Abeken: "Goethe in den Jahren 1771–75," p. 21.

glorify, but which Art abjures. A drama, or any other poem, may carry with it material which admits of symbolical interpretation; but the poet who makes symbolism the substance and the purpose of his work has mistaken his vocation. The whole Greek Drama has been *interpreted* into symbols by some modern scholars; but if the Greek Dramatists had written with any such purpose as that detected by these interpreters they would never have survived to give interpreters, the trouble. The Iliad has quite recently been once more interpreted into an allegory; Dante's "Divine Comedy" has been interpreted into an allegory; Shakespeare's plays have, by Ulrici, been interpreted into moral platitudes; the "Wahlverwandtschaften" has been interpreted into a "world history." Indeed, symbolism being in its very nature *arbitrary* — the indication of a meaning not directly expressed, but arbitrarily thrust *under* the expression — there is no limit to the power of *interpretation.* It is, however, quite certain that the poets had not the meanings which their commentators find; and equally certain that, if poets wrote for commentators, they would never produce masterpieces.

In December, 1803, Weimar had a visitor whose rank is high among its illustrious guests: Madame de Staël. Napoleon would not suffer her to remain in France: she was brought by Benjamin Constant to the German Athens, that she might see and know something of the men her work "De l'Allemagne" was to reveal to her countrymen. Crabb Robinson thus describes his first sight of her: "I was shown into her bedroom, for which, not knowing Parisian customs, I was unprepared. She was sitting, most decorously, *in* her bed, and writing. She had her nightcap on, and her face was not made up for the day. It was by no means a captivating spectacle, but I had a very cordial reception, and two bright black eyes smiled benignantly

on me. After a warm expression of her pleasure at making my acquaintance, she dismissed me till three o'clock. On my return I found a very different person — the accomplished Frenchwoman surrounded by admirers, some of whom were themselves distinguished. Among them was the aged Wieland." It is easy to ridicule Madame de Staël; to call her, as Heine does, "a whirlwind in petticoats," and a "Sultana of mind." But Germans should be grateful to her for that book, which, in spite of errors of detail, still remains one of the best books written about Germany; and the lover of letters will not forget that her genius has, in various departments of literature, rendered for ever illustrious the power of the womanly intellect. Goethe and Schiller, whom she stormed with cannonades of talk, spoke of her intellect with great admiration. Of all living creatures he had seen, Schiller said, she was "the most talkative, the most combative, the most gesticulative;" but she was "also the most cultivated, and the most gifted." The contrast between her French culture and his German culture, and the difficulty he had in expressing himself in French, did not prevent his being much interested. In the sketch of her he sent to Goethe it is well said, "She insists on explaining everything; understanding everything; measuring everything. She admits of no Darkness; nothing Incommensurable! and where her torch throws no light, there nothing can exist. Hence her horror for the Ideal Philosophy, which she thinks leads to mysticism and superstition. For what we call poetry she has no sense; she can only appreciate what is passionate, rhetorical, universal. She does not prize what is false, but does not always perceive what is true."

"When alone with her," writes Crabb Robinson, "it was my great aim to make her feel the transcendent excellence of Goethe. But I failed; she seemed utterly incapable of realising wherein his excellence lay. But

she caught by sympathy a portion of that admiration which every one felt for him. I was provoked to the utterance of a very rude observation. I said: 'Madame, vous n'avez pas compris Goethe, et vous ne le comprendrez jamais.' Her eye flashed — she stretched out her fine arm, of which she was justly vain, and said, in an emphatic tone: 'Monsieur, je comprends tout ce qui mérite d'être compris; ce que je ne comprends n'est rien.'" This is delightfully French, and is of a piece with her reply to Robinson's criticism of her work "De l'Allemagne," to the effect that she had mistaken the plot of the "Triumph der Empfindsamkeit." "Perhaps," she said, "I thought it better as I stated it." Her mode of "restatement" is amusingly illustrated by him in another example. He had quoted to her the noble saying of Kant: "There are two things which the more I contemplate them, the more they fill my mind with admiration — the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me." She sprang up exclaiming, "Ah! que cela est beau! Il faut que je l'écrive;" and in her book it runs thus: "Car, comme un philosophe célèbre a très bien dit: *pour les cœurs sensibles* il y a deux choses," etc.

The Duchess Amalia was enchanted with her, and the duke wrote to Goethe, who was at Jena, begging him to come over, and be seen by her; which Goethe very positively declined. He said, if she wished very much to see him, and would come to Jena, she should be very heartily welcomed; a comfortable lodging and a bourgeois table would be offered her, and every day they could have some hours together when his business was over; but he could not undertake to go to court, and into society; he did not feel himself strong enough. In the beginning of 1804, however, he came to Weimar, and there he made her acquaintance; that is to say, he received her in his own house, at first *tête-à-tête*, and afterward in small circles of friends.

Except when she managed to animate him by her paradoxes or wit, he was cold and formal to her, even more so than to other remarkable people; and he has told us the reason. Rousseau had been drawn into a correspondence with two women, who addressed themselves to him as admirers; he had shown himself in this correspondence by no means to his advantage, now (1803) that the letters appeared in print.[1] Goethe had heard or read of this correspondence; and Madame de Staël had frankly told him she intended to print his conversation. This was enough to make him ill at ease in her society; and although she said he was "un homme d'un esprit prodigieux en conversation . . . quand on le sait faire parler il est admirable," she never saw the real, but a factitious Goethe. By dint of provocation — and champagne — she managed to make him talk brilliantly; she never got him to talk to her seriously. On the 29th of February she left Weimar, to the great relief both of Goethe and Schiller.[2]

Nothing calls for notice during the rest of this year, except the translation of an unpublished work by Diderot, "Rameau's Nephew," and the commencement of the admirable work on "Winckelmann and his Age." The beginning of 1805 found him troubled with a presentiment that either he or Schiller would die in this year. Both were dangerously ill. Christiane, writing to her friend Nicolaus Meyer, says, that for the last three months the Geheimrath has scarcely had a day's health, and at times it seemed as if he

[1] The correspondence alluded to can be no other than that of Rousseau with Madame de la Tour-Franqueville and her friend, whose name is still unknown; it is one of the most interesting among the many interesting correspondences of women with celebrated men. A charming notice of it may be found in Ste. Beuve's "Causeries du Lundi," vol. ii.

[2] In the "Tag- und Jahres-Hefte" 1804 ("Werke," xxvii. p. 143), the reader will find Goethe's account of Madame de Staël and her relation to him.

must die. It was a touching scene when Schiller, a little recovered from his last attack, entered the sick-room of his friend. They walked up to each other, and, without speaking a word, expressed their joy at meeting in a long and manly kiss. Both hoped with the return of spring for return of health and power. Schiller meanwhile was translating the "Phèdre" of Racine; Goethe was translating "Rameau's Nephew," and writing the history of the "Farbenlehre."

The spring was coming, but on its blossoms Schiller's eyes were not to rest. On the 30th of April the friends parted for the last time. Schiller was going to the theatre. Goethe, too unwell to accompany him, said good-bye at the door of Schiller's house. During Schiller's illness Goethe was much depressed. Voss found him once pacing up and down his garden, crying by himself. He mastered his emotion as Voss told him of Schiller's state, and only said, "Fate is pitiless, and man but little."

It really seemed as if the two friends were to be united in the grave as they had been in life. Goethe grew worse. From Schiller life was fast ebbing. On the 8th of May he was given over. "His sleep that night was disturbed; his mind again wandered; with the morning he had lost all consciousness. He spoke incoherently and chiefly in Latin. His last drink was champagne. Toward three in the afternoon came on the last exhaustion; the breath began to fail. Toward four he would have called for naphtha, but the last syllable died upon his lips; finding himself speechless, he motioned that he wished to write something; but his hand could only trace three letters, in which was yet recognisable the distinct character of his writing. His wife knelt by his side; he pressed her hand. His sister-in-law stood with the physician at the foot of the bed, applying warm cushions to the cold feet. Suddenly a sort of electric shock came over his counte-

nance; the head fell back: the deepest calm settled on his face. His features were as those of one in a soft sleep.

"The news of Schiller's death soon spread through Weimar. The theatre was closed; men gathered into groups. Each felt as if he had lost his dearest friend. To Goethe, enfeebled himself by long illness, and again stricken by some relapse, no one had the courage to mention the death of his beloved rival. When the tidings came to Henry Meyer, who was with him, Meyer left the house abruptly lest his grief might escape him. No one else had courage to break the intelligence. Goethe perceived that the members of his household seemed embarrassed and anxious to avoid him. He divined something of the fact, and said at last, 'I see — Schiller must be very ill.' That night they overheard him — the serene man who seemed almost above human affection, who disdained to reveal to others whatever grief he felt when his son died — they overheard Goethe weep! In the morning he said to a friend, 'Is it not true that Schiller was very ill yesterday?' The friend (it was a woman) sobbed. 'He is dead,' said Goethe, faintly. 'You have said it,' was the answer. 'He is dead,' repeated Goethe, and covered his face with his hands."[1]

"The half of my existence is gone from me," he wrote to Zelter. His first thoughts were to continue the "Demetrius" in the spirit in which Schiller had planned it, so that Schiller's mind might still be with him, still working at his side. But the effort was in vain. He could do nothing. "My diary," he says, "is a blank at this period; the white pages intimate the blank in my existence. In those days I took no interest in anything."

[1] Bulwer's "Life of Schiller."

CHAPTER VII.

FAUST.

ALTHOUGH the First Part of "Faust" was not published until 1806, it was already completed before Schiller's death, and may therefore be fitly noticed in this place. For more than thirty years had the work been growing in its author's mind, and although its precise chronology is not ascertainable, yet an approximation is possible which will not be without service to the student.

The Faust-fable was familiar to Goethe as a child. In Strasburg, during 1770–71, he conceived the idea of fusing his personal experience into the mould of the old legend; but he wrote nothing of the work until 1774–75, when the ballad of the King of Thule, the first monologue, and the first scene with Wagner were written; and during his love-affair with Lili he sketched Gretchen's catastrophe, the scene in the street, the scene in Gretchen's bedroom, the scenes between Faust and Mephisto during the walk, and in the street, and the garden scene. In his Swiss journey he sketched the first interview with Mephisto and the compact; also the scene before the city gates, the plan of Helena (subsequently much modified), the scene between the student and Mephisto, and Auerbach's cellar. When in Italy, he read over the old manuscript, and wrote the scenes of the Witches' Kitchen and the cathedral; also the monologue in the forest. In 1797 *the whole was remodelled.* Then were added the two Prologues,

the Walpurgis Night, and the Dedication. In 1801 he completed it, as it now stands, retouching it perhaps in 1806, when it was published. Let us now with some carefulness examine this child of so much care.

The cock in Æsop scratched a pearl into the light of day, and declared that to him it was less valuable than a grain of millet seed. The pearl is only a pearl to him who knows its value. And so it is with fine subjects; they are only fine in the hands of great artists. Where the requisite power exists, a happy subject is a fortune; without that power, it only serves to place the artist's incompetence in less doubtful light. Mediocre poets have tried their 'prentice hands at Faust; poets of undeniable genius have tried to master it; Goethe alone has seen it the object to which his genius was fully adequate; and has produced from it the greatest poem of modern times:

> "An Orphic tale indeed, —
> A tale divine, of high and passionate thoughts,
> To their own music chaunted."

Although genius can find material in the trifles which ordinary minds pass heedlessly by, it is only a very few subjects which permit the full display of genius. The peculiarities of a man's organisation and education invest certain subjects with a charm and a significance. Such was "Der Freischütz" for Weber; the maternity of the Madonna for Raphael; "Faust" for Goethe. Thus it is that a fine subject becomes the marble out of which a lasting monument is carved.

Quite beyond my purpose, and my limits, would be any account of the various materials, historical and æsthetical, which German Literature has gathered into one vast section on Faust and the Faust legend. There is not a single detail which has not exercised the industry and ingenuity of commentators; so that

the curious need complain of no lack of informants. English readers will find in the translations by Hayward and Blackie a reasonable amount of such information pleasantly given; German readers will only have the embarrassment of a choice. Far more important than all learned apparatus, is the attempt to place ourselves at the right point of view for studying and enjoying this wondrous poem, the popularity of which is almost unexampled. It appeals to all minds with the irresistible fascination of an eternal problem, and with the charm of endless variety. It has every element: wit, pathos, wisdom, farce, mystery, melody, reverence, doubt, magic, and irony; not a chord of the lyre is unstrung, not a fibre of the heart untouched. Students earnestly wrestling with doubt, striving to solve the solemn riddles of life, feel their pulses strangely agitated by this poem; and not students alone, but, as Heine says, with allowable exaggeration, every billiard-marker in Germany puzzles himself over it. In "Faust" we see as in a mirror the eternal problem of our intellectual existence; and, beside it, varied lineaments of our social existence. It is at once a problem and a picture. Therein lies its fascination. The problem embraces questions of vital importance; the picture represents opinions, sentiments, classes, moving on the stage of life. The great problem is stated in all its nudity; the picture is painted in all its variety.

This twofold nature of the work explains its popularity; and, what is more to our purpose, gives the clue to its secret of composition; a clue which all the critics I am acquainted with have overlooked; and although I cannot but feel that considerable suspicion must attach itself to any opinion claiming novelty on so old a subject, I hope the contents of this chapter will furnish sufficient evidence to justify its acceptance. The conviction first arose in my mind as the result of

an inquiry into the causes of the popularity of "Hamlet." The two works are so allied, and so associated together in every mind, that the criticism of the one will be certain to throw light on the other.

"Hamlet," in spite of a prejudice current in certain circles that if now produced for the first time it would fail, is the most popular play in our language. It *amuses* thousands annually, and it stimulates the minds of millions. Performed in barns and minor theatres oftener than in Theatres Royal, it is always and everywhere attractive. The lowest and most ignorant audiences delight in it. The source of the delight is twofold: First, its reach of thought on topics the most profound; for the dullest soul can *feel* a grandeur which it cannot *understand*, and will listen with hushed awe to the outpourings of a great meditative mind obstinately questioning fate; Secondly, its wondrous dramatic variety. Only consider for a moment the striking effects it has in the Ghost; the tyrant murderer; the terrible adulterous queen; the melancholy hero, doomed to so awful a fate; the poor Ophelia, broken-hearted and dying in madness; the play within a play, entrapping the conscience of the king; the ghastly mirth of the gravediggers; the funeral of Ophelia interrupted by a quarrel over her grave betwixt her brother and her lover; and, finally, the horrid bloody dénouement. Such are the figures woven in the tapestry by passion and poetry. Add thereto the absorbing fascination of profound thoughts. It may indeed be called the tragedy of thought, for there is as much reflection as action in it; but the reflection itself is made dramatic, and hurries the breathless audience along, with an interest which knows no pause. Strange it is to notice in this work the indissoluble union of refinement with horrors, of reflection with tumult, of high and delicate poetry with broad, palpable, theatrical effects. The machinery is a

machinery of horrors, physical and mental: ghostly apparitions — hideous revelations of incestuous adultery and murder — madness — Polonius killed like a rat while listening behind the arras — gravediggers casting skulls upon the stage and desecrating the churchyard with their mirth — these and other horrors form the machinery by which moves the highest, the grandest, and the most philosophic of tragedies.

It is not difficult to see how a work so various should become so popular. "Faust," which rivals it in popularity, rivals it also in prodigality. Almost every typical aspect of life is touched upon; almost every subject of interest finds an expression in almost every variety of rhythm. It gains a large audience because it appeals to a large audience:

> "Die Masse könnt ihr nur durch Masse zwingen,
> Ein jeder sucht sich endlich selbst was aus.
> Wer Vieles bringt wird manchem Etwas bringen,
> Und jeder geht zufrieden aus dem Haus."[1]

Critics usually devote their whole attention to an exposition of the Idea of Faust; and it seems to me that in this laborious search after a remote explanation they have overlooked the more obvious and natural explanation furnished by the work itself. The reader who has followed me thus far will be aware that I have little sympathy with that Philosophy of Art which consists in translating Art into Philosophy, and that I trouble myself, and him, very little with "considerations on the Idea." Experience tells me that Artists themselves have generally other objects in view than that of developing an Idea; and experience

[1] "The mass can be compelled by mass alone,
Each one at length seeks out what is his own.
Bring much, and every one is sure to find
From out your nosegay something to his mind."
— *Blackie.*

further says that the Artist's public is by no means primarily anxious about the Idea, but leaves that entirely to the critics, — who cannot agree among themselves. In studying a work of Art, we should proceed as in studying a work of nature: after delighting in the effect, we should try to ascertain what are the *means* by which the effect is produced, and not at all what is the Idea lying behind the means. If in dissecting an animal we get clear conceptions of the mechanism by which certain functions are performed, we do not derive any increase of real knowledge from being told that the functions are the final causes of the mechanism; while, on the other hand, if an *à priori* conception of purpose is made to do the work of actual inspection of the mechanism, we find ourselves in a swamp of conjectural metaphysics where no dry land is to be found.

The Theatre Prologue. This opening of the work shows a strolling company of Players about to exhibit themselves in the market-place, to please the motley crowd with some rude image of the Comedy and Tragedy of Life. The personages are three: the Manager, the Poet, and the Merry Andrew: three types representing the question of Dramatic Art in reference to poets and the public. The Manager opposes his hard practical sense to the vague yearnings and unworldly aspirings of the poet; he thinks of receipts, the poet thinks of fame. But here, as ever, hard practical sense is not the best judge; the arbitration of a third is needed, and we have it in the Merry Andrew, who corrects both disputants by looking to the real issue, namely, the *amusement of the public.* When the poet flies off in declamations about Posterity, this wise and merry arbiter slyly asks: Who then is to amuse the present? A question we feel repeatedly tempted to ask those lofty writers who, despising a success they have striven in vain to achieve, throw

themselves with greater confidence on the Future; as if the Future in *its* turn would not also be a Present, having its despisers and its Jeremiahs.

The Theatre Prologue, brief though it is, indicates the whole question of poets, managers, and public. It is the wisest word yet uttered on the topic, and seems as fresh and applicable as if written yesterday. No consideration of importance is omitted, and there are no superfluities. Every line is thrown off with the utmost ease, and with the perfect clearness of perfect strength. One might say without exaggeration that the mastery of genius is as distinctly traceable in these easy, felicitous touches, as in any other part of the work; for it is perhaps in the treatment of such trifles that power is most decisively seen: inferior writers always overdo or underdo such things; they are inflated or flat. All bodies at a certain degree of heat become luminous; and in the exaltation of passion even an inferior mind will have inspirations of felicitous thought; but, reduced to normal temperatures, that which before was luminous becomes opaque, and the inferior mind, being neither exalted by passion nor moved toward new issues by the pressure of crowding thoughts, exhibits its normal strength. And that is why the paradox is true, of real mastery being most clearly discernible in trifles. When the wind is furiously sweeping the surface we cannot distinguish the shallowest from the deepest stream; it is only when the winds are at rest that we can see to the bottom of the shallow stream, and perceive the deep stream to be beyond our fathom.

We may still call upon the wisdom of this Prologue. The Manager wants to know how best to attract the public:

> "Sie sitzen schon mit hohen Augenbraunen
> Gelassen da, und möchten gern erstaunen.
> Ich weiss wie man den Geist des Volks versöhnt;

Doch so verlegen bin ich nie gewesen;
Zwar sind sie an das Beste nicht gewöhnt,
Allein sie haben schrecklich viel gelesen."[1]

The Poet, who never drifts toward Utilitarianism, replies in rhapsodies about his Art; whereupon the Merry Andrew bids him prove himself a master of his Art, by *amusing* the public.

"Let Fancy with her many-sounding chorus,
Reason, Sense, Feeling, Passion, move before us;
But mark you well! a spice of Folly too."

The Manager insists upon "incidents" above all things:

"They come to see, you must engage their eyes."

And he adds, with true managerial instinct:

"You give a piece — give it at once in pieces!
In vain into an artful whole you glue it, —
The public, in the long run, will undo it."

So the dispute runs on, till the Manager settles it by resolving to give a grand and motley spectacle, "From heaven to earth, and thence thro' earth to hell." This sentence gives us the clue to the composition of the work; a clue which has usually been taken only as a guide through the mental labyrinth, through the phases

[1] "With eyebrows arch'd already they sit there,
And gape for something new to make them stare.
I know how to conciliate the mob,
But ne'er yet felt it such a ticklish job;
'Tis true what they have read is not the best,
But that they much have read must be confessed."
— *Blackie's Translation.*

I shall generally follow this translation; but the passage just cited is not of the usual excellence. The last couplet of the original is one of those couplets which, in their ease, familiarity, and felicity, are the despair of translators.

of the psychological problem, instead of through that, and *also* through the scenes of life represented.

The *Prologue in Heaven* succeeds. In many quarters this Prologue has been strangely misunderstood. It has been called a parody of the Book of Job, and censured as a parody. It has been stigmatised as irrelevant and irreverent, out of keeping with the rest, and gratuitously blasphemous. Some translators have omitted it "as unfit for publication." Coleridge debated with himself, "whether it became his moral character to render into English, and so far certainly to lend his countenance to, language much of which he thought vulgar, licentious, and blasphemous."[1] And I will confess that my first impression was strongly against it; an impression which was only removed by considering the legendary nature of the poem, and the legendary style adopted. It is only organic analysis which can truly seize the meaning of organic elements; so long as we judge an organism *ab extra*, according to the Idea, or according to *our* Ideas, and not according to *its* nature, we shall never rightly understand structure and function; and this is as true of poems as of animals. Madame de Staël admirably says of the whole work: "Il serait véritablement trop naïf de supposer qu'un tel homme ne sache pas toutes les fautes de goût qu'on peut reprocher à sa pièce; mais il est curieux de connaître les motifs qui l'ont déterminé à les y laisser, ou plutôt à les y mettre." And in trying to understand what were the motives which induced Goethe to introduce this prologue, and to treat it in this style, we must dismiss at once the supposition that he meant to be blasphemous, and the supposition that he could not have been as grave and decorous as Klopstock, had he deemed it fitting. Let us look a little closer.

The wager between Mephistopheles and the Deity

[1] "Table Talk," vol. ii. p. 118.

was part and parcel of the Legend. In adopting the Legend Goethe could not well omit this part, and his treatment of it is in the true mediæval style, as all who are familiar with mediæval legends, and especially with the Miracle-plays of Europe, will recognise at once. In these Miracle-plays we are startled by the coarsest buffoonery, and what to modern ears sounds like blasphemy, side by side with the most serious lessons; things the most sacred are dragged through the dirt of popular wit; persons the most sacred are made the subject of jests and stories which would send a shudder through the pious reader of our times. As a specimen of the lengths to which this jesting spirit went, in the works of priests, performed by priests, and used for religious instruction, the following bit of buffoonery may be cited. In one of the plays God the Father is seen sleeping on his throne during the Crucifixion. An Angel appears to him; and this dialogue takes place:

"*Angel.* Eternal Father, you are doing what is not right and will cover yourself with shame. Your much beloved son is just dead, and you sleep like a drunkard.

God the Father. Is he then dead?

Angel. Ay, that he is.

God the Father. Devil take me if I knew anything about it."[1]

Nothing is more certain than that such things were not intended as blasphemous; they were the naïve representations which uncultured minds naïvely ac-

[1] Quoted in Scherr: "Geschichte der Deutschen Cultur." p. 171. In the early forms of the drama, I remember nothing so irreverent as this passage, but many of extreme coarseness and ignoble buffoonery. Nor is this strange perversion of the religious ceremony unexampled. In Greece, where the Drama was a religious festival, the same comic license flourished unrestricted; the very stage trodden by the Eumenides and solemnised by the presence of the gods, was, in the after-piece, the scene of gross buffoonery, in which the gods were buffoons.

cepted. In treating a mediæval legend Goethe, therefore, gave it something of the mediæval colouring — a faint tint, just enough to effect his purpose, when the real colour would have been an offence. In adopting the idea of a Prologue he followed the old Puppet-play of "Faust," of which there are many versions.[1] An inferior artist would assuredly have made this Prologue as grand and metaphysical as possible. Goethe intentionally made it naïve. We cannot suppose him unable to treat it otherwise had he so willed; but he did not will it so. He was led to write this scene by his study of the older literature, and the source of its inspiration is traceable in this naïveté.[2] Consider the whole tenor of the work, and see how great a want of keeping there would have been in a Prologue which represented Mephistopheles and the Deity according to modern conceptions of severe propriety, when the rest of the work was treated according to legendary belief; scenes like that with the poodle, the Walpurgis Night, and the Witches' Kitchen, would have been in open contradiction with a Prologue in the modern spirit. It seems to me that the Prologue is just what it should be: poetical, with a touch of mediæval colouring. It strikes the keynote; it opens the world of wonder and legendary belief, wherein you are to see transacted the great and mystic drama of life; it is the threshold at which you are bidden to lay aside your garments soiled with the dust of the work-day world; fairy garments are given in exchange, and you enter a new region, where a drama is acted, dream-like in form, in spirit terribly real.

Then again, the language put into the mouth of Mephistopheles, — which is so irreverent as to make the unreflecting reader regard the whole Prologue as blas-

[1] See Magnin: "Histoire des Marionnettes," p. 325.

[2] It was probably this feeling of its naïveté which made him say that it ought to be translated into the French of Marot.

phemous, — is it not strictly in keeping? Here we see the "spirit that denies" so utterly and essentially irreverent, that even in the presence of the Creator he feels no awe; the grander emotions are not excitable within his soul; and, like all his species, he will not believe that others feel such emotions: "Pardon me," he says, "I cannot utter fine phrases." To such spirits, all grandeur of phrase is grandiloquence. Mephisto is not a hypocrite: he cannot pay even *that* homage to virtue. He is a skeptic, pure and simple. In the presence of the Lord he demeans himself much as we may imagine a "fast" young man behaving when introduced into the presence of a Goethe, without brains enough to be aware of his own insignificance. He offers to lay a wager just as the fast youth would offer to "back" any opinion of his own; and the brief soliloquy in which he expresses his feelings on the result of the interview has a levity and a tinge of sarcasm intensely devilish.

There are, it will be observed, two Prologues: one on the Stage, the other in Heaven. The reason of this I take to lie in the twofold nature of the poem, in the two leading subjects to be worked out. The world and the world's ways are to be depicted; the individual soul and its struggles are to be portrayed. For the former we have the theatre-prologue, because "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." For the latter we have the prologue in heaven, because heaven is the centre and the goal of all struggles, doubts, and reverence; and because Faust is struggling heavenward:

> "Nicht irdisch ist des Thoren Trank noch Speise,
> Ihn treibt die Gährung in die Ferne."

"This fool's meat and drink are not earthly," says Mephisto. "The ferment of his spirit impels him toward the for ever distant."

There is also another organic necessity for these two prologues: in the first we see the Manager and his Poet moving the puppets of the scene; in the second we see the Lord and Mephistopheles moving the puppets of the drama within a drama. It is from strolling players that the cause of the whole representation proceeds; it is from heaven that the drama of the temptation issues. These two prologues were both written in the same year, and long after the conception of the Faust-legend had taken shape in Goethe's mind. They were afterthoughts, and it becomes us to inquire what purpose they were intended to subserve. I believe that in his first conception he only intended the *individual* element of the work to be developed; and that the world-picture was an afterthought, the product of reflection. In this subsequent conception the *Second Part* was more or less forecast; and the two prologues are introductory to the whole poem in this new conception.

But to proceed with our analysis. The first scene is that of *Faust in his study*. The drama here begins. Faust sits amid his books and instruments, vain appliances of vain inquiry. Pale, and worn with midnight toil, he feels his efforts have been vain, feels that science is impotent, feels that no answer to his questions can be extorted by mortal wisdom, and gives himself to magic.

> "That I, with bitter-sweating brow,
> No more may teach what I do not know;
> That I with piercing ken may see
> The world's in-dwelling energy,
> The hidden seeds of life explore,
> And deal in words and forms no more."

The moon, which shines in upon him, recalls him to a sense of the Life without, which he has neglected in his study of parchments and old bones: *Und fragst du*

noch warum dein Herz, he exclaims in the well-known lines, and opens the magic book to summon a spirit to his aid.

"(*He seizes the book, and pronounces with a mysterious air the sign of the Spirit. A red flame darts forth and the Spirit appears in the flame.*)
Spirit. Who calls me?
Faust (*turning away*). Vision of affright!
Spirit. Thou hast with mighty spells invoked me,
And to obey thy call provoked me,
And now —
Faust. Hence from my sight!
Spirit. Thy panting prayer besought my form to view,
To hear my voice, and know my semblance too;
Now bending from my lofty sphere to please thee,
Here am I! — ha! what shuddering terrors seize thee,
And overpower thee quite! where now is gone
The soul's proud call? the breast that scorn'd to own
Earth's thrall, a world in itself created,
And bore and cherish'd? with its fellow sated
That swell'd with throbbing joy to leave its sphere
And vie with spirits, their exalted peer.
Where art thou, Faust? whose invocation rung
Upon mine ear, whose powers all round me clung?
Art *thou* that Faust? whom melts my breath away,
Trembling ev'n to the life-depths of thy frame,
Now shrunk into a piteous worm of clay!
Faust. Shall I then yield to thee, thou thing of flame?
I am thy peer, am Faust, am still the same!
Spirit. Where life's floods flow,
And its tempests rave,
Up and down I wave,
Flit I to and fro:
Birth and the grave,
Life's secret glow,
A changing motion,
A boundless ocean,
Whose waters heave
Eternally;
Thus on the noisy loom of Time I weave
The living mantle of the Deity.
Faust. Thou who round the wide world wendest,
Thou busy sprite, how near I feel to thee!

Spirit. Thou'rt like the spirit whom thou comprehendest,
Not me! [*Vanishes.*
Faust (*astounded*). Not thee!
Whom, then?
I, image of the Godhead,
Not like thee! [*Knocking is heard.*
Oh, death! 'tis Wagner's knock — he comes to break
The charm that bound me while the Spirit spake!
Thus my supremest bliss ends in delusion
Marr'd by a sneaking pedant-slave's intrusion!"

How fine is this transition, the breaking in of prose reality upon the visions of the poet, — the entrance of Wagner, who, hearing voices, fancied Faust was declaiming from a Greek drama, and comes to profit by the declamation. Wagner is a type of the Philister, and pedant; he sacrifices himself to Books as Faust does to Knowledge. He adores the letter. The dust of folios is his element; parchment is the source of his inspiration.

Left once more to himself, Faust continues his sad soliloquy of despair. The thoughts, and the music in which they are uttered, must be sought in the original; no translation can be adequate. He resolves to die; and seizing the phial which contains the poison, says:

"I look on thee, and soothed is my heart's pain;
I grasp thee, straight is lulled my racking brain,
And wave by wave my soul's flood ebbs away.
I see the ocean wide before me rise,
And at my feet her sparkling mirror lies;
To brighter shores invites a brighter day."

He raises the cup to his lips, when suddenly a sound of bells is heard, accompanied by the distant singing of the choir. It is Easter. And with these solemn sounds are born the memories of his early youth, awakening the feelings of early devotion. Life retains him upon earth; Memory vanquishes despair.

This opening scene was *suggested* by the old Puppet-

play in which Faust appears, surrounded with compasses, spheres, and cabalistic instruments, wavering between theology, the divine science, philosophy, the human science, and magic, the infernal science. But Goethe has enriched the suggestion from his own wealth of thought and experience.

The scene before the gate. We quit the gloomy study, and the solitary struggles of the individual, to breathe the fresh air, and contemplate every-day life and every-day joyousness. It is Sunday; students and maid-servants, soldiers and shopkeepers, are thronging out of the city gates on their way to various suburban beer-houses which line the highroad. Clouds of dust and smoke accompany the throng; joyous laughter, incipient flirtations, merry song, and eager debates give us glimpses of the common world. This truly German picture is wonderfully painted, and its place in the poem is significant, showing how life is accepted by the common mind, in contrast with the previous scene which showed life pressing on the student, demanding from him an interpretation of its solemn significance. Faust has wasted his days in questioning; the people spend theirs in frivolous pursuits, or sensual enjoyment; the great riddle of the world never troubles them, for to them the world is a familiarity and no mystery. They are more anxious about good tobacco and frothy beer, about whether this one will dance with that one, and about the new official dignitaries, than about all that the heavens above or earth beneath can have of mystery. Upon this scene Faust, the struggler, and Wagner, the pedant, come to gaze. It affects Faust deeply, and makes him feel how much wiser the simple people are than he is — for they enjoy.

> "Hier ist des Volkes wahrer Himmel,
> Zufrieden jauchzet Gross und Klein:
> *Hier bin ich Mensch, hier darf ich's seyn.*"

Yes, here he feels himself a man, one of the common brotherhood, for here he yearns after the enjoyment which he sees them pursuing. But Wagner, true pedant, feels nothing of the kind; he is only there because he wishes to be with Faust. He is one of those who, in the presence of Niagara, would vex you with questions about arrow-headed inscriptions, or in the tumult of a village festival would discuss the origin of the Pelasgi.

The people crowd round Faust, paying him the reverence always paid by the illiterate to the "scholar." Wagner sees it with envy; Faust feels it to be a mockery. Reverence to him, who feels profoundly his own insignificance! He seats himself upon a stone, and gazing on the setting sun, pours forth melancholy reflections on the worthlessness of life, and the inanity of his struggles. The old peasant has recalled to him the scenes of his youth, when while the fever raged he was always tending the sick, and saved so many lives, "helping, helped by the Father of Good." Seated on that stone, the visions of his youth come back upon his mind:

> "Here sat I oft, plunged in deep thought, alone,
> And wore me out with fasting and with prayer.
> Rich then in hope, in faith then strong,
> With tears and sobs my hands I wrung,
> And weened the end of that dire pest,
> From the will of Heaven to rest."

His means were unholy.

> "Here was the medicine, and the patient died,
> But no one questioned — who survived?
> And thus have we, with drugs more curst than hell,
> Within these vales, these mountains here,
> Raged than the very pest more fell!
> I have myself to thousands poisons given;
> They pin'd away, and I must live to hear
> Men for the reckless murd'rers thanking heaven!"

Wagner does not understand such scruples. He is not troubled, like Faust, with a consciousness of a double nature. The Poodle appears, to interrupt their dialogue, and Wagner, with characteristic stupidity, sees nothing but a *Poodle* in the apparition:

"Ich sah ihn lange schon, nicht wichtig schien er mir."

The spiritual insight of Faust is more discerning. They quit the scene, the Poodle following.

Faust's Study. The student and the poodle enter. The thoughts of Faust are solemn; this makes the poodle restless; this restlessness becomes greater and greater as Faust begins to translate the Bible — an act which is enough to agitate the best-disposed devil. A bit of incantation follows, and Mephistopheles appears. I must not linger over the details of the scene, tempting as they are, but come to the compact between Faust and Mephistopheles. The state of mind which induces this compact has been artfully prepared. Faust has been led to despair of attaining the high ambition of his life; he has seen the folly of his struggles; seen that Knowledge is a will-o'-the-wisp to which he has sacrificed Happiness. He now pines for Happiness, though he disbelieves in it as he disbelieves in Knowledge. In utter skepticism he consents to sell his soul *if* ever he shall realise Happiness. What profound sadness is implied in the compact, that if ever he shall say to the passing moment, "Stay, thou art fair," he is willing to perish eternally!

This scene of the compact has also its origin in the old Puppet-play, and very curious is it to trace how the old hints are developed by Goethe. In the Augsburg version there is one condition among those stipulated by Mephistopheles to the effect that Faust shall never again ascend the theological chair. "But what will the public say?" asks Faust. "Leave that

to me," Mephisto replies; "I will take your place; and believe me I shall add to the reputation you have gained in Biblical learning."[1] Had Goethe known this version, he would probably not have omitted such a sarcastic touch.

I must pass over the inimitable scene which follows between Mephisto and the young Student newly arrived at the University, with boundless desire for knowledge. Every line is a sarcasm, or a touch of wisdom. The *position* of this scene in its relation to the whole deserves, however, a remark. What is the scene, but a withering satire on every branch of knowledge? and where does it occur, but precisely at that juncture when Knowledge has by the hero been renounced, when Books are closed for ever, and Life is to be enjoyed? Thus the words of Mephisto, that Theory is a graybeard, and Life a fresh tree, green and golden —

> "Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
> Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum" —

prepare us for the utter abjuration of Theory, and the eager pursuit of Enjoyment. This leads to —

Auerbach's Cellar, and its scene of Aristophanic buffoonery. The cellar reeks with the fumes of bad wine and stale tobacco; its blackened arches ring with the sound of boisterous mirth and noisy songs. The sots display themselves in all their sottishness. And *this* is one form of human enjoyment: a thing still unhappily to be seen in every city of Europe. Faust looks on with a sort of bewildered disgust, which soon wearies him: and then away! away! to the other scene as foul, as hideous — to —

The Witches' Kitchen. Here Faust passes from bestiality to bestiality, from material grossness to spiritual

[1] "Das Closter," vol. v. p. 236.

grossness, from the impurity of sots to the impurity of witches. In this den of sorcery he drinks of the witch's potion, which will make him, as Mephisto says, see a Helen in the first woman he meets. Rejuvenescence is accompanied by desires hitherto unknown to him; he is young, and young passions hurry him into the "roaring flood of time."

Meeting with Margaret. The simple girl, returning from church, is accosted by Faust, and answers him somewhat curtly; here commences the love-episode which gives to the poem a magic none can resist. Shakespeare himself has drawn no such portrait as that of Margaret: no such peculiar union of passion, simplicity, homeliness, and witchery. The poverty and inferior social position of Margaret are never lost sight of; she never becomes an abstraction; it is Love alone which exalts her above her lowly station, and it is only *in* passion that she is so exalted. Very artful and very amusing is the contrast between this simple girl and her friend Martha, who makes love to Mephisto with direct worldly shrewdness. The effect of this contrast in the celebrated garden scene is very fine; and what a scene that is! I have no language in which to express its intense and overpowering effect: the picture is one which remains indelible in the memory; certain lines linger in the mind, and stir it like the memory of deep, pathetic music. For instance, Margaret's asking him to think of her, even if it be for a moment, — she will have time enough to think of *him:*

> "Denkt ihr an mich ein Augenblickchen nur,
> *Ich werde Zeit genug an euch zu denken haben.*"

What a picture of woman's lonely life, in which the thoughts, not called out by the busy needs of the hour, centre in one object! And then that exquisite episode of her plucking the flower, "He loves me — loves me

not;" followed by this charming reflection when Faust has departed:

> "Du lieber Gott! was so ein Mann
> Nicht alles alles denken kann!
> Beschämt nur steh' ich vor ihm da,
> Und sag' zu allen Sachen ja.
> Bin doch ein arm unwissend Kind,
> Begreife nicht was er an mir find't."[1]

Wood and Cavern. I do not understand the relation of this scene to the whole. Faust is alone among the solitudes of Nature, pouring out his rapture and his despair:

> "*Faust.* Alas! that man enjoys no perfect bliss,
> I feel it now. Thou gavest me with this joy,
> Which brings me near and nearer to the gods,
> A fellow, whom I cannot do without;
> Though, cold and heartless, he debases me
> Before myself, and, with a single breath
> Blows all the bounties of thy love to nought.
> He fans within my breast a raging fire
> For that fair image, busy to do ill.
> Thus reel I from desire on to enjoyment,
> And in enjoyment languish for desire."

Mephisto enters, and the two wrangle. The scene is full of fine things, but its position in the work is not clear to me. It is followed by that scene in Margaret's room which exhibits her at the spinning-wheel, singing "Meine Ruh' ist hin" — "My peace is gone, my heart is sad;" and is succeeded by the second garden

[1] The naïveté of expression is not to be translated. Blackie has given the sense:

> Dear God! what such a man as this
> Can think on anything you may!
> I stand ashamed, and answer yes
> To every word that he may say.
> I wonder what a man so learned as he
> Can find in a poor simple girl like me.

scene, in which she questions Faust about his religion. I must give the famous confession of Faith, though more literally than Blackie renders it:

"Misunderstand me not, thou lovely one.
Who dares name Him?
And who confess:
'I believe in Him?'
Who can feel
And force himself
To say: 'I believe not in Him?'
The All-encompasser,
The All-sustainer
Encompasses, sustains He not
Thee, Me, Himself?
Does not the Heaven arch itself above?
Lies not the earth firm here below?
And rise not the eternal stars
Looking downwards friendly?
Gaze not our eyes into each other,
And is not all thronging
To thy head and heart,
Weaving in eternal mystery
Invisibly visibly about thee?
Fill up thy heart therewith, in all its greatness,
And when thou'rt wholly blest in this emotion,
Then call it what thou wilt,
Call it Joy! Heart! Love! God!
I have no name for it,
Feeling is all-in-all.
Name is sound and smoke,
Clouding the glow of Heaven."

Margaret feels this confession to be the same in substance as what the Priest teaches her, only in somewhat different language:

"Nur mit ein Bischen andern Worten."

There is something inexpressibly touching in her solicitude about her lover's faith; it serves to bring out one element of her character; as her instinctive aversion to Mephisto brings out another element; she sees on his

forehead that he feels no sympathy, that "He never yet hath loved a human soul." In his presence she almosts feels that her own love vanishes; certain it is that in his presence she cannot pray.

The guileless innocence which prattles thus, prepares us for the naïve readiness with which she expresses her willingness to admit her lover to her apartment, and consents to give her mother the sleeping draught. This scene is, with terrible significance, followed by that brief scene at the Well, where Margaret hears her friend Bessy triumph, feminine-wise, over the fall of one of their companions. Women, in all other things so compassionate, are merciless to each other precisely in those situations where feminine sympathy would be most grateful, where feminine tenderness should be most suggestive. Bessy says not a word against the seducer; her wrath falls entirely on the victim, who has been "rightly served." Margaret — taught compassion by experience — cannot *now* triumph as formerly she would have triumphed. But now she too is become what she chid, she too is a sinner, and cannot chide. The closing words of this soliloquy have never been translated; there is something in the simplicity and intensity of the expression which defies translation.

> "Doch — Alles was dazu mich trieb,
> *Gott! war so gut! ach war so lieb!*[1]"

The next scene shows her praying to the Virgin, the Mother of Sorrows; and this is succeeded by the return of her brother Valentine, suffering greatly from his sister's shame; he interrupts the serenade of Faust, attacks him, and is stabbed by Mephisto, falls, and expires uttering vehement reproaches against Margaret.

[1] The meaning is, "Yet if I sinned, the sin came to me in shape so good, so lovely, that I loved it."

From this bloodshed and horror we are led to the Cathedral. Margaret prays amid the crowd — the evil spirit at her side. A solemn, almost stifling sense of awe rises at this picture of the harassed sinner seeking refuge, and finding fresh despair. Around her kneel in silence those who hear with comfort the words to her so terrible:

> "Dies iræ, dies illa,
> Solvet sæclum in favilla!"

And when the choir bursts forth —

> "Judex ergo cum sedebit
> Quidquid latet apparebit,
> Nil inultum remanebit" —

she is overpowered by remorse, for the Evil Spirit interprets these words in their most appalling sense.

The Walpurgis Nacht. The introduction of this scene in this place would be in great error if "Faust" were simply a drama. The mind resents being snatched away from the contemplation of human passion, and plunged into the vagaries of dreamland. After shuddering with Margaret, we are in no mood for the Blocksberg. But "Faust" is not a drama; its purpose is not mainly that of unfolding before our eyes the various evolutions of an episode of life; its object is not to rivet attention through a story. It is a grand legendary spectacle, in which all phases of life are represented. The scene on the Blocksberg is part of the old Legend, and is to be found in many versions of the Puppet-play.[1] Note how Goethe introduces the scene immediately after that in the Cathedral — thus representing the wizard-element in contrast with the

[1] In the Strasburg version, Mephisto promises Hanswurst a steed on which he may gallop through the air; but, instead of a winged horse, there comes an old goat with a light under his tail.

religious element: just as previously he contrasted the Witches' Kitchen and its orgies with the orgies of Auerbach's cellar.

We must not linger on the Blocksberg, but return to earth, and the tragic drama there hastening to its dénouement. Seduction has led to infanticide: infanticide has led to the condemnation of Margaret. Faust learns it all; learns that a triple murder lies to his account — Valentine, Margaret, and her child. In his despair he reproaches Mephisto for having concealed this from him, and wasted his time in insipid fooleries. Mephisto coldly says that Margaret is not the first who has so died. Upon which Faust breaks forth: "Not the first! Misery! Misery! by no human soul to be conceived! that more than one creature of God should ever have been plunged into the depth of this woe! that the first, in the writhing agony of her death, should not have atoned for the guilt of all the rest before the eyes of the eternally Merciful!"

One peculiarity is noticeable in this scene: it is the only bit of prose in the whole work; — what could have determined him to write it in prose? At first I thought it might be the nature of the scene: but the intensity of language seems to demand verse, and surely the scene in Auerbach's cellar is more prosaic in its nature than this? The question then remains, and on it the critic may exert his ingenuity.

What painting in the six brief lines which make up the succeeding scene! Faust and Mephisto are riding over a wild and dreary plain; the sound of carpenters at work on the gibbet informs them of the preparations for the execution of Margaret.

And now the final scene opens. Faust enters the dungeon where Margaret lies huddled on a bed of straw, singing wild snatches of ancient ballads, her reason gone, her end approaching. The terrible pathos of this interview draws tears into our eyes after twenty

readings. As the passion rises to a climax, the grim, passionless face of Mephistopheles appears — thus completing the circle of irony which runs throughout the poem. Every one feels this scene to be untranslatable. The witchery of such lines as —

"Sag' Niemand dass du schon bei Gretchen warst,"

Mr. Hayward has already pointed out as beyond translation; "indeed it is only by a lucky chance that a succession of simple, heartfelt expressions or idiomatic felicities are ever capable of exact representation in another language."[1]

The survey just taken, disclosing a succession of varied scenes representative of Life, will not only help to explain the popularity of "Faust," but may help also to explain the secret of its composition. The rapidity and variety of the scenes give the work an air of formlessness, until we have seized the principle of organic unity binding these scenes into a whole. The reader who first approaches it is generally disappointed: the want of visible connection makes it appear more like a Nightmare than a work of Art. Even accomplished critics have been thus misled. Thus Coleridge, who battled so ingeniously for Shakespeare's Art, was utterly at a loss to recognise any unity in "Faust." "There is no whole in the poem," he said; "the scenes are mere magic-lantern pictures, and a large part of the work is to me very flat."[2] Coleridge, combating French critics, proclaimed (in language slightly altered from Schlegel), that the unity of a work of Art is "organic, not mechanic;" and he was held to have done signal service by pointing out the unity of Shakespeare's conception underlying variety of detail; but when he came to Goethe, whom he disliked, and of whom he always spoke

[1] "Translation of Faust:" Preface, p. xxxi. 3d Edition.
[2] "Table Talk," vol. ii. p. 114.

unworthily, he could see nothing but magic-lantern scenes in variety of detail. If "Hamlet" is not a magic-lantern, "Faust" is not. The successive scenes of a magic-lantern have no connection with a general plan; have no dependence one upon the other. In the analysis just submitted to the reader, both the general plan and the interdependence of the scenes have, it is hoped, been made manifest. A closer familiarity with the work removes the first feeling of disappointment. We learn to understand it, and our admiration grows with our enlightenment. The picture is painted with so cunning a hand, and yet with so careless an air, that Strength is veiled by Grace, and nowhere seems straining itself in Effort.

I believe few persons have read "Faust" without disappointment. There are works which, on a first acquaintance, ravish us with delight: the ideas are new; the form is new; the execution striking; in the glow of enthusiasm we pronounce the new work a masterpiece. We study it, learn it by heart, and somewhat weary our acquaintances by the emphasis of enthusiasm. In a few years, or it may be months, the work has become unreadable, and we marvel at our old admiration. The ideas are no longer novel; they appear truisms or perhaps falsisms. The execution is no longer admirable, for we have discovered its trick. In familiarising our minds with the work, our admiration has been slowly strangled by the contempt which familiarity is said to breed, but which familiarity only breeds in contemptible minds, or for things contemptible. The work then was no masterpiece? Not in the least.[1] A masterpiece seldom excites sudden

[1] A deduction must be made from the opinion which even the wise express of a new book or occurrence. Their opinion gives me tidings of their mood, and some vague guess at the new fact, but is nowise to be trusted as the lasting relation between that intellect and that thing. — *Emerson.*

enthusiasm: it must be studied much and long, before it is fully comprehended; we must grow up to it, for it will not descend to us. Its influence is less sudden, more lasting. Its emphasis grows with familiarity. We never become disenchanted; we grow more and more awestruck at its infinite wealth. We discover no trick, for there is none to discover. Homer, Shakespeare, Raphael, Beethoven, Mozart, never storm the judgment; but, once fairly in possession, they retain it with increasing influence. I remember looking at the Elgin marbles with an indifference which I was ashamed to avow: and since then I have stood before them with a rapture almost rising into tears. On the other hand, works which now cannot detain me a minute before them, excited sudden enthusiasm such as in retrospection seems like the boyish taste for unripe apples. With "Faust" my first feeling was disappointment. Not understanding the real nature of the work, I thought Goethe had missed his aim, because he did not fulfil my conceptions. It is the arrogance of criticism to demand that the artist, who never thought of us, should work in the direction of our thoughts. As I grew older, and began to read "Faust" in the original (helped by the dictionary), its glory gradually dawned upon my mind. It is now one of those works which exercise a fascination to be compared only to the minute and inexhaustible love we feel for those long dear to us, every expression having a peculiar and quite mystic influence.

A masterpiece like "Faust," because it is a masterpiece, will be almost certain to create disappointment, in proportion to the expectations formed of it. Sir Joshua Reynolds, on his first visit to the Vatican, could not conceal his mortification at not relishing the works of Raphael; and was only relieved from it on discovering that others had experienced the same feeling. "The truth is," he adds, "that if these works

had been really what I expected, they would have contained beauties superficial and alluring, but by no means such as would have entitled them to their great reputation." We need not be surprised therefore to hear even distinguished men express unfavourable opinions of "Faust." Charles Lamb, for instance, thought it a vulgar melodrame in comparison with Marlowe's "Faustus;" an opinion he never could have formed had he read "Faust" in the original. He read it in a translation, and no work suffers more from translation. However unwilling a reader may be that his competence to pronounce a judgment should be called in question, it must be said in all seriousness and with the most complete absence of exaggeration and prejudice, that in a translation he really has not the work before him.

Several times in these pages I have felt called upon to protest against the adequacy of all translation of poetry. In its happiest efforts, translation is but approximation; and its efforts are not often happy. A translation may be good *as* translation, but it cannot be an adequate reproduction of the original. It may be a good poem; it may be a good imitation of another poem; it may be better than the original; but it cannot be an adequate reproduction; it cannot be the same thing in another language, producing the same effect on the mind. And the cause lies deep in the nature of poetry. "Melody," as Beethoven said to Bettina, "gives a *sensuous existence to poetry;* for does not the meaning of a poem become embodied in melody?" The meanings of a poem and the meanings of the individual words may be reproduced; but in a poem meaning and form are as indissoluble as soul and body; and the form cannot be reproduced. The effect of poetry is a compound of music and suggestion; this music and this suggestion are intermingled in words, to alter which is to alter the effect. For words

in poetry are not, as in prose, simple representatives of objects and ideas: they are parts of an organic whole — they are tones in the harmony. Substitute *other* parts, and the result is a monstrosity, as if an arm were substituted for a wing; substitute *other* tones or semitones, and you produce a discord. Words have their music and their shades of meaning too delicate for accurate reproduction in any other form; the suggestiveness of one word cannot be conveyed by another. Now all translation is of necessity a substitution of one word for another: the substitute may express the meaning, but it cannot accurately reproduce the music, nor those precise shades of suggestiveness on which the delicacy and beauty of the original depend. Words are not only symbols of objects, but centres of associations; and their suggestiveness depends partly on their sound. Thus there is not the slightest difference in the meaning expressed when I say —

> "The dews of night began to fall,"

or —

> "The nightly dews commenced to fall."

Meaning and metre are the same; but one is poetry, the other prose. Wordsworth paints a landscape in this line:

> "The river wanders at its own sweet will."

Let us translate it into other words:

> "The river runneth free from all restraint."

We preserve the meaning, but where is the landscape? Or we may turn it thus:

> "The river flows, now here, now there, at will,"

which is a very close translation, much closer than any usually found in a foreign language, where indeed it would in all probability assume some such form as this:

"The river self-impelled pursues its course."

In these examples we have what is seldom found in translations, accuracy of meaning expressed in similar metre; yet the music and the poetry are gone; because the music and the poetry are organically dependent on certain peculiar arrangements of sound and suggestion. Walter Scott speaks of the verse of a ballad by Mickle which haunted his boyhood; it is this:

"The dews of summer night did fall;
The moon, sweet regent of the sky,
Silvered the sides of Cumnor Hall,
And many an oak that grew thereby."

This verse we will rearrange as a translator would rearrange it:

"The nightly dews commenced to fall;
The moon, whose empire is the sky,
Shone on the walls of Cumnor Hall,
And all the oaks that stood thereby."

Here is a verse which certainly would never have haunted any one; and yet upon what apparently slight variations the difference of effect depends! The meaning, metre, rhymes, and most of the words, are the same; yet the difference in the result is infinite. Let us translate it a little more freely:

"Sweetly did fall the dews of night;
The moon, of heaven the lovely queen,
On Cumnor Hall shone silver bright,
And glanced the oaks' broad boughs between."

I appeal to the reader's experience whether this is not a translation which in another language would pass

for excellent; and nevertheless it is not more like the original than a wax rose is like a garden rose. To conclude these illustrations, I will give one which may serve to bring into relief the havoc made by translators who adopt a *different* metre from that of the original.[1] Wordsworth begins his famous Ode:

"There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;
Turn whereso'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more."

The translator, fully possessed with the sense of the passage, makes no mistakes, but adopting another metre, we will suppose, paraphrases it thus:

"A time there was when wood, and stream, and field,
The earth, and every common sight, did yield
To me a pure and heavenly delight,
Such as is seen in dream and vision bright.
That time is past; no longer can I see
The things which charmed my youthful reverie."

These are specimens of translating from English into English,[2] and show what effects are produced by a change of music and a change of suggestion. It is clear that in a foreign language the music must incessantly be changed, and as no complex words are precisely equivalent in two languages, the suggestions

[1] "Goethe's poems," said Beethoven, "exercise a great sway over me, not only by their meaning, but by their rhythm also. It is a language which urges me on to composition."

[2] Aristotle has a very similar argument and mode of illustration in the "De Poetica."

must also be different. Idioms are of course untranslatable. Felicities of expression are the idioms of the poet; but as on the one hand these felicities are essential to the poem, and on the other hand untranslatable, the vanity of translation becomes apparent. I do not say that a translator cannot produce a fine poem in imitation of an original poem; but I utterly disbelieve in the possibility of his giving us a work which can be to us what the original is to those who read it. If, therefore, we reflect what a poem "Faust" is, and that it contains almost every variety of style and metre, it will be tolerably evident that no one unacquainted with the original can form an *adequate* idea of it from translation; and if this is true, it will explain why Charles Lamb should prefer Marlowe's "Faustus," and why many other readers should speak slightingly of "Faust."

As useful memoranda for comparison, I will here analyse Marlowe's "Faustus" and Calderon's "El Magico Prodigioso."

"Doctor Faustus" has many magnificent passages, such as Marlowe of the "mighty line" could not fail to write; but on the whole it is wearisome, vulgar, and ill-conceived. The lowest buffoonery, destitute of wit, fills a large portion of the scenes; and the serious parts want dramatic evolution. There is no character well drawn. The melancholy figure of Mephistopholis has a certain grandeur, but he is not the Tempter, according to the common conception, creeping to his purpose with the cunning of the serpent; nor is he the cold, ironical "spirit that denies;" he is more like the Satan of Byron, with a touch of piety and much repentance. The language he addresses to Faustus is such as would rather frighten than seduce him.

The reader who opens "Faustus" under the impression that he is about to see a philosophical subject treated philosophically, will have mistaken both the

character of Marlowe's genius and of Marlowe's epoch. "Faustus" is no more philosophical in intention than the "Jew of Malta," or "Tamburlaine the Great." It is simply the theatrical treatment of a popular legend, — a legend admirably characteristic of the spirit of those ages in which men, believing in the agency of the devil, would willingly have bartered their future existence for the satisfaction of present desires. Here undoubtedly is a philosophical problem, which even in the present day is constantly presenting itself to the speculative mind. Yes, even in the present day, since human nature does not change: forms only change, the spirit remains; nothing perishes, — it only manifests itself differently. Men, it is true, no longer believe in the devil's agency; at least, they no longer believe in the power of calling up the devil and transacting business with him; otherwise there would be hundreds of such stories as that of Faust. But the spirit which created that story and rendered it credible to all Europe remains unchanged. The sacrifice of the future to the present is the spirit of that legend. The blindness to consequences caused by the imperiousness of desire; the recklessness with which inevitable and terrible results are braved in perfect consciousness of their being inevitable, provided that a temporary pleasure can be obtained, is the spirit which dictated Faust's barter of his soul, which daily dictates the barter of men's souls. We do not make compacts, but we throw away our lives; we have no Tempter face to face with us, offering illimitable power in exchange for our futurity: but we have our own Desires, imperious, insidious, and for them we barter our existence, — for one moment's pleasure risking years of anguish.

The story of Faustus suggests many modes of philosophical treatment, but Marlowe has not availed himself of any: he has taken the popular view of the legend, and given his hero the vulgarest motives. This

is not meant as a criticism, but as a statement. I am not sure that Marlowe was wrong in so treating his subject; I am only sure that he treated it so. Faustus is disappointed with logic, because it teaches him nothing but debate, — with physic, because he cannot with it bring dead men back to life, — with law, because it concerns only the "external trash," — and with divinity, because it teaches that the reward of sin is death, and that we are all sinners. Seeing advantage in none of these studies, he takes to necromancy, and there finds content; and how?

> "*Faust.* How am I glutted with conceit of this!
> Shall I make spirits fetch me what I please?
> Resolve me of all ambiguities?
> Perform what desperate enterprise I will?
> I'll have them fly to India for gold,
> Ransack the ocean for orient pearl,
> And search all corners of the new-found world
> For pleasant fruits and princely delicates.
> I'll have them read me strange philosophy:
> And tell the secrets of all foreign kings:
> I'll have them wall all Germany with brass,
> And make swift Rhine circle fair Wittenburg:
> I'll have them fill the public schools with skill,
> Wherewith the students shall be bravely clad:
> I'll levy soldiers with the coin they bring,
> And chase the Prince of Parma from our land,
> And reign sole king of all the provinces:
> Yea, stranger engines for the brunt of war,
> Than was the fiery keel at Antwerp bridge,
> I'll make my servile spirits to invent."

There may in this seem something trivial to modern apprehensions, yet Marlowe's audience sympathised with it, having the feelings of an age when witches were burned, when men were commonly supposed to hold communication with infernal spirits, when the price of damnation was present enjoyment.

The compact signed, Faustus makes use of his power by scampering over the world, performing practical

jokes and vulgar incantations, — knocking down the Pope, making horns sprout on the heads of noblemen, cheating a jockey by selling him a horse of straw, and other equally vulgar tricks, which were just the things the audience would have done had they possessed the power. Tired of his buffooneries, he calls up the vision of Helen; his rapture at the sight is a fine specimen of how Marlowe can write on a fitting occasion.

His last hour now arrives: he is smitten with remorse, like many of his modern imitators, when it is too late; sated with his power, he now shudders at the price. After some tragical raving, and powerfully depicted despair, he is carried off by devils. The close is in keeping with the commencement: Faustus is damned because he made the compact. Each part of the bargain is fulfilled; it is a tale of sorcery, and Faustus meets the fate of a sorcerer.

The vulgar conception of this play is partly the fault of Marlowe, and partly of his age. It might have been treated quite in conformity with the general belief; it might have been a tale of sorcery, and yet magnificently impressive. What would not Shakespeare have made of it? Nevertheless, we must in justice to Marlowe look also to the state of opinion in his time; and we shall then admit that another and higher mode of treatment would perhaps have been less acceptable to the audience. Had it been metaphysical, they would not have understood it; had the motives of Faustus been more elevated, the audience would not have believed in them. To have saved him at last, would have been to violate the legend, and to outrage their moral sense. For, why should the black arts be unpunished? why should not the sorcerer be damned? The legend was understood in its literal sense, in perfect accordance with the credulity of the audience. The symbolical significance of the legend is entirely a modern creation.

Let us now turn to Calderon's "El Magico Prodigioso," often said to have furnished Goethe with the leading idea of his "Faust," which, however, does *not* resemble "El Magico" in plot, incidents, situations, characters, or ideas. The "Faustus" of Marlowe has a certain superficial resemblance to the "Faust," because the same legend is adopted in both; but in "El Magico" the legend is altogether different; the treatment different. Calderon's latest editor, Don Eugenio de Ochoa, is quite puzzled to conceive how the notion of resemblance got into circulation, and gravely declares that it is *enteramente infundada.*

The scene lies in the neighbourhood of Antioch, where, with "glorious festival and song," a temple is being consecrated to Jupiter. Cyprian, a young student, perplexing himself with the dogmas of his religion (polytheism), has retired from the turmoil of the town to enjoy himself in quiet study. Pliny's definition of God is unsatisfactory, and Cyprian is determined on finding a better. A rustling amongst the leaves disturbs him, caused by the demon, who appears in the dress of a cavalier. They commence an argument, Cyprian pointing out the error of polytheism, the demon maintaining his truth. We see that Cyprian has been converted to monotheism — a step toward his conversion to Christianity; and this conversion operated by the mere force of truth, this change of opinion resulting from an examination of polytheism, was doubtless flattering to Calderon's audience, — a flattery carried to its acme in the feeble defence of the demon, who on his entrance declares, aside, that Cyprian shall never find the truth. Calderon would not let the devil have the best of the argument even for a moment. Instead of the "spirit that denies," he presents us with a malignant fiend, as impotent as he is malignant, — a fiend who acknowledges himself worsted in the argument, and who resolves to con-

quer by lust the student whom he cannot delude by sophisms. He has power given him to wage enmity against Justina's soul; he will make Justina captivate Cyprian, and with one blow effect two vengeances. We need not point out the dissimilarity between such a fiend and the fiend Mephistopheles.

Cyprian is left alone to study, but is again interrupted by the quarrel of Lelio and Floro, two of his friends, who, both enamoured of Justina, have resolved to decide their rivalry by the sword. Cyprian parts them, and consents to become arbiter. He then undertakes to visit Justina in order to ascertain to whom she gives the preference. In this visit he falls in love with her himself. There is an underplot, in which Moscon, Clarin, and Libia, according to the usual style of Spanish comedies, parody the actions and sentiments of their masters; I omit it, as well as the other scenes which do not bear on the subject-matter of the drama.

Justina, a recent convert to Christianity, is the type of Christian innocence. She rejects Cyprian's love, as she had rejected that of her former admirers. This coldness exasperates him:

> "So beautiful she was — and I,
> Between my love and jealousy,
> And so convulsed with hope and fear,
> Unworthy as it may appear, —
> So bitter is the life I live
> That, hear me, Hell! I now would give
> To thy most detested spirit
> My soul, for ever, to inherit,
> To suffer punishment and pine,
> So this woman may be mine.
> Hear'st thou, Hell? Dost thou reject it?
> My soul is offered.
> *Demon* (*unseen*). I accept it.
> [*Tempest, with thunder and lightning.*"

In another writer we might pause to remark on the "want of keeping" in making a polytheist address

such a prayer to hell; but Calderon is too full of such things to cause surprise at any individual instance. The storm rages, — a ship goes down at sea; the demon enters as a shipwrecked passenger, and says aside:

> "It was essential to my purposes
> To wake a tumult on the sapphire ocean,
> That in this unknown form I might at length
> Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture
> Sustained upon the mountain, and assail
> With a new war the soul of Cyprian,
> Forging the instruments of his destruction
> Even from his love and from his wisdom."

Cyprian addresses words of comfort to him on his misfortune; the demon says it is in vain to hope for comfort, since all is lost that gave life value. He then tells his story; describing, by means of a very transparent equivocation, the history of his rebellion in heaven and his chastisement. In the course of his narrative he insinuates his power of magic, hoping to awaken in Cyprian's breast a love of the art. Cyprian offers him the hospitality due to a stranger, and they quit the scene.

In their next scene the demon asks Cyprian the reason of his constant melancholy. This is an opportunity for the display of fustian, never let slip by a Spanish dramatist. Cyprian describes his mistress and his passion for her with the volubility of a lover, and the taste of an Ossian. He very circumstantially informs the demon that the "partes que componen á esta divina muger" — the charms which adorn this paragon — are the charms of Aurora, of fleecy clouds and pearly dews, of balmy gales and early roses, of meandering rivulets and glittering stars, of warbling birds and crystal rocks, of laurels and of sunbeams; and so forth through the space of more than fifty lines, in a style to captivate magazine poets, and to make

other readers yawn. Having described her, he declares that he is so entranced with this creature as to have entirely forsaken philosophy; he is willing to give away his soul for her. The demon accepts the offer, splits open a rock and shows Justina reclining asleep. Cyprian rushes toward her, but the rock closes again, and the demon demands that the compact shall be signed before the maiden is delivered. Cyprian draws blood from his arm, and with his dagger writes the agreement on some linen. The demon then consents to instruct him in magic, by which, at the expiration of one year, he will be able to possess Justina.

This temptation-scene is very trivial, — feeble in conception and bungling in execution. Remark the gross want of artistic keeping in it: Cyprian had before addressed a vow to hell that he would give his soul for Justina; the demon answered, "I accept it!" Thunder and lightning followed, — effective enough as a melodramatic *coup de théâtre*, utterly useless to the play; for although the demon appears, it is not to make a compact with Cyprian, it is not even to tempt him; it is simply to become acquainted with him, gain his confidence, and, *afterward*, tempt him. The time elapses, and the demon then tempts Cyprian, as we have seen. How poor, feeble, and staggering these outlines! What makes the feebleness of this scene stand out still more clearly, is the gross and senseless parody of Clarin, the *gracioso*. Like his master, he too is in love; like his master, he offers to sell his soul to the demon, and strikes his nose, that with the blood he may write the compact on his handkerchief.

It is in this temptation-scene, however, that the single point of resemblance occurs between the plays of Calderon and Goethe. It is extremely slight, as every one will observe; but slight as it is, some critics have made it the basis of their notion of plagiarism.

The compact is the point which the legend of St. Cyprian and the legend of Faust have in common. In all other respects the legends differ and the poems differ. It is curious however to compare the motives of the three heroes, Faustus, Cyprian, Faust; to compare what each demands in return for his soul; and in this comparison Calderon "shows least bravely;" his hero is the most pitiful of the three.

To return to our analysis: the year's probation has expired, and Cyprian is impatient for his reward. He has learned the arts of necromancy, in which he is almost as proficient as his master; boasts of being able to call the dead from out their graves, and of possessing many other equally wonderful powers. Yet with this science he does nothing, attempts nothing. Of what use then was the year's probation? of what use this necromantic proficiency? Had the question been put to Calderon he would probably have smiled, and answered, "to prolong the play and give it variety," — a sensible answer from a rapid playwright, but one which ill accords with the modern notion of his being a profound artist. Perhaps it is too much to expect that a man who wrote between one and two hundred plays should have produced one that could be regarded as a work of art; nor should we have judged him by any higher standard than that of a rapid and effective playwright, had not the Germans been so hyperbolical in criticism, which the English, who seldom read the poet, take for granted must be just.

The demon calls upon the spirits of hell to instil into Justina's mind impure thoughts, so that she may incline to Cyprian. But this could have been done at first, and so have spared Cyprian his year's probation and his necromantic studies, — studies which are never brought to bear upon Justina herself, though undertaken expressly for her conquest. Justina enters in a state of violent agitation: a portion of the scene

will serve as a specimen. I borrow from the translation of this scene which appeared in the *Monthly Chronicle*, vi. p. 346.

The demon enters and Justina asks him:

"Say if thou a phantom art,
Formed by terror and dismay?
Dæm. No; but one call'd by the thought
That now rules, with tyrant sway,
O'er thy faltering heart, — a man
Whom compassion thither brought,
That he might point out the way
Whither fled thy Cyprian.
Just. And so shalt thou fail. This storm
Which afflicts my frenzied soul
May imagination form
To its wish, but ne'er shall warm
Reason to its mad control.
Dæm. If thou hast the thought permitted,
Half the sin is almost done!
Wilt thou, since 'tis all committed,
Linger ere the joy be won?
Just. In our power abides not thought,
(Thought, alas! how vain to fly);
But the deed is, and 'tis one
That we sin in mind have sought
And another to have done:
I'll not move my foot to try.
Dæm. If a mortal power assail
Justina with all its might,
Say will not the victory fail
When thy wish will not avail,
But inclines thee in despite?
Just. By opposing to thee now
My free will and liberty.
Dæm. To my power they soon shall bow.
Just. If it could such power avow,
Would our free will then be free?
Dæm. Come, 'tis bliss that thou wilt prove.
Just. Dearly would I gain it so.
Dæm. It is peace, and calm, and love.
[*Draws, but cannot move her.*
Just. It is misery, death, despair!
Dæm. Heavenly joy!

Just. 'Tis bitter woe!
Dœm. Lost and shamed, forsaken one!
Who in thy defence shall dare?
Just. My defence is God alone.
Dœm. Virgin, virgin, thou hast won!
[*Loosens his hold.*"

How delighted must the audience have been at this victory over the demon, by the mere announcement of a faith in God! Unable to give Cyprian the real Justina, the demon determines on deceiving him with a phantom. A figure enveloped in a cloak appears, and bids Cyprian follow. In the next scene Cyprian enters with the fancied Justina in his arms. In his transport he takes off the cloak, and instead of Justina discovers a Skeleton, who replies to his exclamation of horror:

"Así, Cipriano, son
Todas las glorias del mundo!"

"Such are the glories of this world." In this terrific situation we recognise Calderon the inquisitor and the playwright, but the artist we do not recognise. As a piece of stage effect this skeleton is powerfully conceived; as a religious warning it is equally powerful; as art it is detestable. It is a fine situation, though he has used it twice elsewhere; but the consistency of the play is violated by it. If the demon wished to seduce Cyprian, would he have attempted to do so by *such* means? No. But Calderon here, as elsewhere, sacrifices everything to a *coup de théâtre.*

Cyprian, exasperated at the deception, demands an explanation. The demon confesses that he is unable to force Justina, as she is under the protection of a superior power. Cyprian asks who that power is. The demon hesitates, but is at length obliged to own that it is the God of the Christians. Cyprian seeing that God protects those who believe in him, refuses to

own allegiance to any other. The demon is furious, and demands Cyprian's soul, who contends that the demon has not fulfilled his share of the compact. Words run high: Cyprian draws his sword and stabs the demon, of course without avail, — another stage effect. The demon drags him away, but, like Justina, he calls God to his aid, and the demon rushes off discomfited.

Cyprian becomes a Christian, and Justina assures him of his salvation in spite of his sins, for

> ". . . . no tiene
> Tantas estrellas el cielo,
> Tantas arenas el mar,
> Tantas centellas el fuego,
> Tantos átomos el dia,
> Como él perdona pecados."

Justina and Cyprian are condemned as heretics, and burned at Antioch, martyrs of the Christian faith. The demon appears riding on a serpent in the air, and addresses the audience, telling them that God has forced him to declare the innocence of Justina, and the freedom of Cyprian from his rash engagement. Both now repose in the realms of the blessed.

These analyses will enable the reader to perceive how Marlowe and Calderon have treated the old story, each in a spirit conformable with his genius and his age; the one presenting a legend in its naïveté, the other a legend as the vehicle for religious instruction. Goethe taking up the legend in an age when the naïve belief could no longer be accepted, treated it likewise in a way conformable with his genius and his age. The age demanded that it should be no simple legend, but a symbolical legend; not a story to be credited as *fact*, but a story to be credited as *representative* of fact; for although the rudest intellect would reject the notion of any such actual compact with Satan,

the rudest and the loftiest would see in that compact a symbol of their own desires and struggles.

To adapt the legend to his age, Goethe was forced to treat it symbolically, and his own genius gave the peculiar direction to that treatment. We shall see in the Second Part, how his waning vigour sought inspiration more in symbolism than in poetry, more in reflection than in emotion; but for the present, confining ourselves to the First Part, we note in his treatment a marvellous mingling of the legendary and the symbolical, of the mediæval and the modern. The depth of wisdom, the exquisite poetry, the clear, bright painting, the wit, humour, and pathos, every reader will distinguish; and if this chapter were not already too long, I should be glad to linger over many details, but must now content myself with the briefest indication of the general aspects of the poem.

And first of the main theme: "The intended theme of Faust," says Coleridge, "is the consequences of a misology or hatred and depreciation of knowledge caused by an originally intense thirst for knowledge baffled. But a love of knowledge for itself and for pure ends would never produce such a misology, but only a love of it for base and unworthy purposes." Having stated this to be the theme, Coleridge thus criticises the execution: "There is neither causation nor proportion in Faust; he is a ready-made conjuror from the beginning; the *incredulis odi* is felt from the first line. The sensuality and thirst after knowledge are unconnected with each other."[1] Here we have an example of that criticism before alluded to, which imposes the conceptions of the critic as the true end and aim of the artist. Coleridge had formed the plan of a Faust of his own, and blames Goethe for not treating the topic the way Coleridge conceived it should be treated. A closer scrutiny would have convinced

[1] "Table Talk," vol. ii. p. 111.

him that misology is not the intended theme. After the first two scenes knowledge is never mentioned; misology is exhausted as a topic in the initial stages of the work. And what says Goethe himself? "The marionette fable of Faust murmured with *many voices* in my soul. I too had wandered into every department of knowledge, and had returned early enough satisfied with the vanity of science. And life, too, I had tried under various aspects, and always came back sorrowing and unsatisfied." Here, if anywhere, we have the key to "Faust." It is a reflex of the struggles of his soul. Experience had taught him the vanity of philosophy; experience had early taught him to detect the corruption underlying civilisation, the dark undercurrents of crime concealed beneath smooth outward conformity. If then we distinguish for a moment one of the two aspects of the poem — if we set aside the picture, to consider only the problem — we come to the conclusion that the theme of "Faust" is the cry of despair over the nothingness of life. Misology forms a portion, but only a portion, of the theme. Baffled in his attempts to penetrate the *mystery* of life, Faust yields himself to the Tempter, who promises that he shall penetrate the *enjoyment* of Life. He runs the round of pleasure, as he had run the round of science, and fails. The orgies of Auerbach's cellar, the fancies of the Blocksberg, are unable to satisfy his cravings. The passion he feels for Gretchen is vehement, but feverish, transitory; she has no power to make him say to the passing moment, "Stay, thou art fair." He is restless because he seeks, — seeks the Absolute, which can never be found. This is the doom of Humanity:

> "Es irrt der Mensch so lang' er strebt."

It has been said reproachfully that in "Faust" the problem is stated but not solved. I do not think

this reproach valid, because I do not think a poem was the fit vehicle for a solution. When the Singer becomes a Demonstrator, he abdicates his proper office, to bungle in the performance of another. But very noticeable it is that Goethe, who has so clearly stated the problem, has also, both practically, in his life, and theoretically in his writings, given us the nearest approach to a solution by showing how the "heavy and the weary weight" of this great burden may be wisely borne. His doctrine of Renunciation — *das wir entsagen müssen* — applied by him with fertile results in so many directions, both in life and theory, will be found to approach a solution, or at any rate to leave the insoluble mystery without its perplexing and tormenting influence. Activity and sincerity carry us far, if we begin by Renunciation, if we at the outset content ourselves with the Knowable and Attainable, and give up the wild impatience of desire for the Unknowable and Unattainable. The mystery of existence is an awful problem, but it *is* a mystery and placed beyond the boundaries of human faculty. Recognise it as such, and renounce! Knowledge can only be relative. But this relative knowledge is infinite, and to us infinitely important: in that wide sphere let each work according to ability. Happiness, ideal and absolute, is equally unattainable: renounce it! The sphere of active duty is wide, sufficing, ennobling to all who strenuously work in it. In the very sweat of labour there is stimulus which gives energy to life; and a consciousness that our labour tends in some way to the lasting benefit of others, makes the rolling years endurable.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LYRICAL POEMS.

THE "Faust" and the Lyrics suffice to give Goethe preëminence among the poets of modern times, Shakespeare excepted; and had they stood alone as representatives of his genius, no one would ever have disputed his rank. But he has given the world many other works: in other words, he has thrown open many avenues through which the citadel of his fame may be attacked. His fame is lessened by his wealth; the fact of his doing so much, has lessened the belief in his power; for as the strength of a beam is measured by its weakest part, so, but unjustly, are poets tested by their weakest works, whenever enthusiasm does not drown criticism. Thus does mere wealth endanger reputation; for when many targets are ranged side by side, the clumsiest archer will succeed in striking one; and that writer has the best chance with the critics who presents the smallest surface. Greek Literature is so grand to us mainly because it is the fragment of fragments; the masterpieces have survived, and no failures are left to bear counter-witness. Our own contemporary Literature seems so poor to us, not because there are no good books, but because there are so many bad, that even the good are hidden behind the mass of mediocrity which obtrudes itself upon the eye. Goethe has written forty volumes on widely different subjects. He has written with a perfection no German ever achieved before, and he has also written with a

feebleness which it would be gratifying to think no German would ever emulate again. But the weak pages are prose. In verse he is always a *singer;* even the poorest poems have something of that grace which captivates us in his finest. The gift of Song, which is the especial gift of the poet, and which no other talents can replace, makes his trifles pleasant, and his best lyrics matchless.

The Lyrics are the best known of his works, and have by their witchery gained the admiration even of antagonists. One hears very strange opinions about him and his works; but one never hears anything except praise of the minor poems. They are instinct with life and beauty, against which no prejudice can stand. They give musical form to feelings the most various, and to feelings that are *true.* They are gay, playful, tender, passionate, mournful, reflective, and picturesque; now simple as the tune which beats time to nothing in your head, now laden with weighty thought; at one moment reflecting with ethereal grace the whim and fancy of caprice, at another sobbing forth the sorrows which press a cry from the heart. "These songs," says Heine, himself a master of song, "have a playful witchery which is inexpressible. The harmonious verses wind round your heart like a tender mistress. The word embraces you while the thought imprints a kiss."[1]

Part of this witchery is the sincerity of the style. It does not seek surprises in diction, nor play amid metaphors, which in most poets are imperfect expressions of the meaning they are thought to adorn. It opens itself like a flower with unpretending grace, and with such variety as lies in the nature of the subject. There is no ornament in it. The beauties which it reveals are organic, they form part and parcel of the

[1] "Die harmonischen Verse umschlingen dein Herz wie eine zärtliche Geliebte; das Wort umarmt dich, während der Gedanke dich küsst."

very tissue of the poem, and are not added as ornaments. Read, for example, the ballad of the "Fisherman" (translated, vol. i. p. 326). How simple and direct the images; and yet how marvellously pictorial. Turning to a totally different poem, the "Bride of Corinth,"—what can surpass the directness with which every word indicates the mysterious and terrible situation? Every line is as a fresh page in the narrative, rapidly and yet gradually unfolded. A young man arrives at Corinth from Athens, to seek the bride whom his and her parents have destined for him. Since that agreement of the marriage her family has turned Christian; and "when a new faith is adopted, love and truth are often uprooted like weeds." Ignorant of the change, he arrives. It is late in the night. The household are asleep; but a supper is brought to him in his chamber, and he is left alone. The weary youth has no appetite; he throws himself on his bed without undressing. As he falls into a doze the door opens, and by the light of his lamp he sees a strange guest enter — a maiden veiled, clothed in white, about her brow a black and gold band. On seeing him, she raises a white hand in terror. She is about to fly, but he entreats her to stay — points to the banquet, and bids her sit beside him and taste the joys of the gods, Bacchus, Ceres, and Amor. But she tells him she belongs no more to joy; the gods have departed from that silent house where One alone in Heaven, and One upon the Cross, are adored; no sacrifices of Lamb or Ox are made, the sacrifice is that of a human life. This is a language the young pagan understands not. He claims her as his bride. She tells him she has been sent into a cloister. He will hear nothing. Midnight — the spectral hour — sounds; and she seems at her ease. She drinks the purple wine with her white lips, but refuses the bread he offers. She gives him a golden chain, and takes in return a lock of his hair. She tells him she

is cold as ice, but he believes that love will warm her, even if she be sent from the grave:

> "Wechselhauch und Kuss!
> Liebesüberfluss!
> Brennst du nicht und fühlest mich entbrannt?"

Love draws them together; eagerly she catches the fire from his lips, and each is conscious of existence only in the other; but although the vampire bride is warmed by his love, no heart beats in her breast. It is impossible to describe the weird voluptuousness of this strange scene; this union of Life and Death; this altar of Hymen erected on the tomb. It is interrupted by the presence of the mother, who, hearing voices in the bridegroom's room, and the kiss of the lovers mingling with the cockcrow, angrily enters to upbraid her slave, whom she supposes to be with the bridegroom. She enters angry "and sees — God! she sees her own child!" The vampire rises like a Shadow, and reproaches her mother for having disturbed her. "Was it not enough that you sent me to an early grave?" she asks. But the grave could not contain her: the psalms of priests — the blessings of priests had no power over her; earth itself is unable to stifle Love. She has come; she has sucked the blood from her bridegroom's heart; she has given him her chain and received the lock of his hair. To-morrow he will be gray; his youth he must seek once more in the tomb. She bids her mother prepare the funeral pyre, open her coffin, and burn the bodies of her bridegroom and herself, that they together may hasten to the gods.

In the whole of this wondrous ballad there is not a single comparison. Everything is told in the most direct and simple style. Everything stands before the eye like reality. The same may be said of the well-known "Gott und die Bajadere," which is, as it were, the inverse of the "Bride of Corinth." The Indian

god passing along the banks of the Ganges is invited by the Bajadere to enter her hut, and repose himself. She coquets with him, and lures him with the wiles of her caste. The god smiles and sees with joy, in the depths of her degradation, a pure human heart. He gains her love; but, to put her to the severest proof, he makes her pass through

"Lust und Entsetzen und grimmige Pein."

She awakes in the morning to find him dead by her side. In an agony of tears she tries in vain to awaken him. The solemn, awful sounds of the priests chanting the requiem break on her ear. She follows his corpse to the pyre, but the priests drive her away; she was not his wife; she has no claim to die with him. But Passion is triumphant; she springs into the flames, and the god rises from them with the rescued one in his arms.

The effect of the changing rhythm of the poem, changing from tender lightness to solemn seriousness, and the art with which the whole series of events is unfolded in successive pictures, are what no other German poet has ever attained. The same art is noticeable in the "Erl King," known to every reader through Schubert's music, if through no other source. The father riding through the night, holding his son warm to his breast; the child's terror at the Erl King, whom the father does not see; and the bits of landscape which are introduced in so masterly a way, as explanations on the father's part of the appearances which frighten the child; thus mingling the natural and supernatural, imagery with narrative: all these are cut with the distinctness of plastic art. The "Erl King" is usually supposed to have been original; but Viehoff, in his "Commentary on Goethe's Poems," thinks that the poem Herder translated from the Danish, "Erlkönigs Tochter," suggested the idea.

The verse is the same. The opening line and the concluding line are nearly the same; but the story is different, and none of Goethe's art is to be found in the Danish ballad, which tells simply how Herr Oluf rides to his marriage, and is met on the way by the Erl King's daughter, who invites him to dance with her; he replies that he is unable to stop and dance, for to-morrow is his wedding-day. She offers him golden spurs and a silk shirt, but he still replies, "To-morrow is my wedding-day." She then offers him heaps of gold. "Heaps of gold will I gladly take; but dance I dare not — will not." In anger she strikes him on the heart, and bids him ride to his bride. On reaching home, his mother is aghast at seeing him so pallid. He tells her he has been in the Erl King's country. "And what shall I say to your bride?" "Tell her I am in the wood with my horse and hound." The morning brings the guests, who ask after Herr Oluf. The bride lifts up the scarlet cloak; "there lay Herr Oluf, and he was dead." I have given this outline of the Danish ballad for the reader to compare with the "Erlkönig:" a comparison which will well illustrate the difference between a legend and a perfect poem.

It is not in the ballads alone, of which three have just been mentioned, that Goethe's superiority is seen. I might go through the two volumes of Lyrics, and write a commentary as long as this Biography, without exhausting so fertile a topic. Indeed his Biography is itself but a commentary on these poems, which are real expressions of what he has thought and felt:

> "Spät erklingt was früh erklang,
> Glück und Unglück wird Gesang."

Even when, as in the ballads, or in poems such as the exquisite Idyl of "Alexis and Dora," he is not giving utterance to any personal episode, he is scarcely ever

feigning. Many of the smaller poems are treasures of wisdom; many are little else than the carollings of a bird "singing of summer in full-throated ease." But one and all are inaccessible through translation; therefore I cannot attempt to give the English reader an idea of them; the German reader has already anticipated me, by studying them in the original.

Book the Seventh

1805 to 1832

"Ὡς εὖ ἴσθι ὅτι ἐμοιγε ὅσον αἱ ἄλλαι αἱ κατα το σωμα ἡδναι ἀπομαραινονται, τοσουτον αἴξονται αἱ περι τους λογους ἐπιθυμιαι τε και ἡδοναι."

PLATO, *Rep.* i. 6.

"Le Temps l'a rendu spectateur."

MADAME DE STAËL.

CHAPTER I.

THE BATTLE OF JENA.

THE death of Schiller left Goethe very lonely. It was more than the loss of a friend; it was the loss also of an energetic stimulus which had urged him to production; and in the activity of production he lived an intenser life. During the long, laborious years which followed — years of accumulation, of study, of fresh experience, and of varied plans — we shall see him produce works of which many might be proud; but the noonday splendour of his life has passed, and the light which we admire is the calm effulgence of the setting sun.

As if to make him fully aware of his loss, Jacobi came to Weimar; and although the first meeting of the old friends was very pleasant, they soon found the chasm which separated them intellectually had become wider and wider, as each developed in his own direction. Goethe found that he understood neither Jacobi's ideas nor his language. Jacobi found himself a stranger in the world of his old friend. This is one of the penalties we pay for progress; we find ourselves severed from the ancient moorings; we find our language is like that of foreigners to those who once were dear to us, and understood us.

Jacobi departed, leaving him more painfully conscious of the loss he had sustained in losing Schiller's ardent sympathy. During the following month, Gall visited Jena, in the first successful eagerness of propa-

gating his system of Phrenology, which was then a startling novelty. All who acknowledge the very large debt which Physiology and Psychology owe to Gall's labours (which acknowledgment by no means implies an acceptance of the premature, and, in many respects, imperfect, system founded on those labours) will be glad to observe that Goethe not only attended Gall's lectures, but in private conversations showed so much sympathy, and such ready appreciation, that Gall visited him in his sick-room, and dissected the brain in his presence, communicating all the new views to which he had been led. Instead of meeting this theory with ridicule, contempt, and the opposition of ancient prejudices — as men of science, no less than men of the world, were and are still wont to meet it — Goethe saw at once the importance of Gall's mode of dissection (since universally adopted), and of his leading views;[1] although he also saw that science was not sufficiently advanced for a correct verdict to be delivered. Gall's doctrine pleased him because it determined the true position of Psychology in the study of man. It pleased him because it connected man with Nature more intimately than was done in the old schools, showing the identity of all mental manifestation in the animal kingdom.[2]

But these profound and delicate investigations were in the following year interrupted by the roar of cannon. On the 14th of October, at seven o'clock in the morning, the thunder of distant artillery alarmed the inhabitants of Weimar. The battle of Jena had begun. Goethe heard the cannon with terrible distinctness; but as it slackened toward noon, he sat down to dinner

[1] Compare "Freundschaftliche Briefe von Goethe und seiner Frau an N. Meyer," p. 19.

[2] Gall's assertion that Goethe was born for political Oratory more than for Poetry, has much amused those who know Goethe's dislike of politics; and does not, indeed, seem a very happy hit.

as usual. Scarcely had he sat down, when the cannon burst over their heads. Immediately the table was cleared. Riemer found him walking up and down the garden. The balls whirled over the house; the bayonets of the Prussians in flight gleamed over the garden wall. The French had planted a few guns on the heights above Weimar, from which they could fire on the town. It was a calm, bright day. In the streets everything appeared dead. Every one had retreated under cover. Now and then the boom of a cannon broke silence; the balls, hissing through the air, occasionally struck a house. The birds were singing sweetly on the esplanade; and the deep repose of Nature formed an awful contrast to the violence of war.

In the midst of this awful stillness a few French hussars rode into the city, to ascertain if the enemy were there. Presently a whole troop galloped in. A young officer came to Goethe to assure him that his house would be secure from pillage; it had been selected as the quarters of Marshal Augereau. The young hussar who brought this message was Lili's son! He accompanied Goethe to the palace. Meanwhile several of the troopers had made themselves at home in Goethe's house. Many houses were in flames. Cellars were broken open. The pillage began.

Goethe returned from the palace, but without the marshal, who had not yet arrived. They waited for him till deep in the night. The doors were bolted, and the family retired to rest. About midnight two tirailleurs knocked at the door, and insisted on admittance. In vain they were told the house was full, and the marshal expected. They threatened to break in the windows, if the door were not opened. They were admitted. Wine was set before them, which they drank like troopers, and then, they insisted on seeing their host. They were told he was in bed. No matter; he must get up; they had a fancy to see him.

In such cases, resistance is futile. Reimer went up and told Goethe, who, putting on his dressing-gown, came majestically down-stairs, and by his presence considerably awed his drunken guests, who were as polite as French soldiers can be when they please. They talked to him; made him drink with them, with friendly clink of glasses; and suffered him to retire once more to his room. In a little while, however, heated with wine, they insisted on a bed. The other troopers were glad of the floor; but these two would have nothing less than a bed. They stumbled up-stairs; broke into Goethe's room, and there a struggle ensued, which had a very serious aspect. Christiane, who throughout displayed great courage and presence of mind, procured a rescue, and the intruders were finally dragged from the room. They then threw themselves on the bed kept for the marshal; and no threats would move them. In the morning the marshal arrived, and sentinels protected the house. But even under this protection, the disquiet may be imagined when we read that twelve casks of wine were drunk in three days; that eight and twenty beds were made up for officers and soldiers, and that the other costs of this billeting amounted to more than two thousand dollars.

The sun shining with continuous autumnal splendour in these days looked down on terrible scenes in Weimar. The pillage was prolonged, so that even the palace was almost stripped of the necessaries of life. In this extremity, while houses were in flames close to the palace, the Duchess Luise manifested that dauntless courage which produced a profound impression on Napoleon, as he entered Weimar, surrounded by all the terrors of conquest, and was received at the top of the palace stairs by her, — calm, dignified, unmoved. *Voilà une femme à laquelle même nos deux cent canons n'ont pu faire peur!* he said to Rapp. She pleaded for her people; vindicated her husband; and by her

constancy and courage prevailed over the conqueror, who was deeply incensed with the duke, and repeatedly taunted him with the fact that he spared him solely out of respect for the duchess.

The rage of Napoleon against the duke was as unwise as it was intemperate; but I do not allude to it for the purpose of showing how petty the great conqueror could be; I allude to it for the purpose of quoting the characteristic outburst which it drew from Goethe. "Formed by nature to be a calm and impartial spectator of events, even I am exasperated," said Goethe to Falk, "when I see men required to perform the impossible. That the duke assists wounded Prussian officers robbed of their pay; that he lent the lion-hearted Blücher four thousand dollars after the battle of Lübeck — that is what you call a conspiracy! — that seems to you a fit subject for reproach and accusation! Let us suppose that to-day misfortune befalls the grand army; what would a general or a field-marshal be worth in the emperor's eyes who would act precisely as our duke has acted under these circumstances? I tell you the duke *shall* act as he acts! He *must* act so! He would do great injustice if he ever acted otherwise! Yes; and even were he thus to lose country and subjects, crown and sceptre, like his ancestor, the unfortunate John; yet must he not deviate one hand's breadth from his noble manner of thinking, and from that which the duty of a man and a prince prescribes in the emergency. Misfortune! What is misfortune? This is a misfortune — that a prince should be compelled to endure such things from foreigners. And if it came to the same pass with him as with his ancestor, Duke John; if his ruin were certain and irretrievable, let not that dismay us: we will take our staff in our hands, and accompany our master in adversity, as old Lucas Kranach did: we will never forsake him. The women and children when

they meet us in the villages, will cast down their eyes, and weep, and say to one another, "That is old Goethe, and the former Duke of Weimar, whom the French emperor drove from his throne, because he was so true to his friends in misfortune; because he visited his uncle on his death-bed; because he would not let his old comrades and brothers in arms starve!"

"At this," adds Falk, "the tears rolled in streams down his cheeks. After a pause, having recovered himself a little, he continued: "I will sing for bread! I will turn strolling ballad singer, and put our misfortunes into verse! I will wander into every village and into every school wherever the name of Goethe is known; I will chaunt the dishonour of Germany, and the children shall learn the song of our shame till they are men; and thus they shall sing my master upon his throne again, and yours off his!"

I shall have to recur to this outburst on a future occasion, and will now hasten to the important event which is generally supposed to have been directly occasioned by the perils of the battle of Jena. I mean his marriage.

CHAPTER II.

GOETHE'S WIFE.

THE judgments of men are singular. No action in Aristotle's life subjected him to more calumny than his generous marriage with the friendless Phythia; no action in Goethe's life has excited more scandal than his marriage with Christiane. It was thought disgraceful enough in him to have taken her into his house (a *liaison* out of the house seeming, in the eyes of the world, a venial error, which becomes serious directly it approaches nearer to the condition of marriage); but for the great poet, the Geheimrath, actually to complete such an enormity as to crown his connection with Christiane by a legal sanction, *this* was indeed more than society could tolerate.

I have already expressed my opinion of this unfortunate connection, a *mésalliance* in every sense; but I must emphatically declare my belief that the redeeming point in it is precisely that which has created the scandal. Better far had there been no connection at all; but if it was to be, the nearer it approached a real marriage, and the farther it was removed from a fugitive indulgence, the more moral and healthy it became. The fact of the *mésalliance* was not to be got over. Had he married her at first, this would always have existed. But many other and darker influences would have been averted. There would have been no such "skeleton in the closet of his life" as, unfortunately we know to have existed. Let us for a moment look into that closet.

Since we last caught a glimpse of Christiane Vulpius, some fifteen years have elapsed, in the course of which an unhappy change has taken place. She was then a bright, lively, pleasure-loving girl. Years and self-indulgence have now made havoc with her charms. The evil tendency, which youth and animal spirits kept from excess, has asserted itself with a distinctness which her birth and circumstances may explain, if not excuse, but which can only be contemplated in sadness. Her father, we know, ruined himself by intemperance; her brother impaired fine talents by similar excess; and Christiane, who inherited the fatal disposition, was not saved from it by the checks which refined society imposes, for in Weimar she was shut out from society by her relation to Goethe. Elsewhere, as we learn from her letters to Meyer, she was not quite excluded from female society. Professor Wolff and Kapellmeister Reichardt present her to their daughters; and she dances at public balls. But in Weimar this was impossible. There she lived secluded, shunned; and had to devote herself wholly to her domestic duties, which for one so lively and so eager for society must have had a depressing influence. Fond of gaiety, and especially of dancing, she was often seen at the students' balls at Jena; and she accustomed herself to an indulgence in wine, which rapidly destroyed her beauty, and which was sometimes the cause of serious domestic troubles. I would fain have passed over this episode in silence; but it is too generally known to be ignored; and it suggests a tragedy in Goethe's life little suspected by those who saw how calmly he bore himself in public. The mere mention of such a fact at once suggests the conflict of feelings hidden from public gaze; the struggle of indignation with pity, of resolution with weakness. I have discovered but one printed indication of this domestic grief, and that is in a letter from Schiller to Körner, dated 21st Oct., 1800.

"On the whole, he produces very little now, rich as he still is in invention and execution. His spirit is not sufficiently at ease; his wretched domestic circumstances, which he is too weak to alter, make him so unhappy."

Too weak to alter! Yes, there lies the tragedy, and there the explanation. Tender, and always shrinking from inflicting pain, he had not the sternness necessary to put an end to such a condition. He suffered so much because he could not inflict suffering. To the bystander such endurance seems inexplicable; for the bystander knows not how the insidious first steps are passed over, and how endurance strengthens with repeated trials; he knows not the hopes of a change which check violent resolutions, nor how affection prompts and cherishes such hopes against all evidence. The bystander sees certain broad facts, which are inexplicable to him only because he does not see the many subtle links which bind those facts together; he does not see the mind of the sufferer struggling against a growing evil, and finally resigning itself, and trying to put a calm face on the matter. It is easy for us to say, Why did not Goethe part from her at once? But parting was not easy. She was the mother of his child; she had been the mistress of his heart, and still was dear to him. To part from her would not have arrested the fatal tendency; it would only have accelerated it. He was too weak to alter his position. He was strong enough to bear it. Schiller divined this by his own moral instincts. "I wish," he writes in a recently discovered letter, "that I could justify Goethe in respect to his domestic relations as I can confidently in all points respecting literature and social life. But unfortunately, by some false notions of domestic happiness, and an unlucky aversion to marriage, he has entered upon an engagement which weighs upon him in his domestic circle, and makes him unhappy, yet to

shake off which, I am sorry to say, he is too weak and soft-hearted. This is the only shortcoming in him; but even this is closely connected with a very noble part of his character, and he hurts no one but himself."

And thus the years rolled on. Her many good qualities absolved her few bad qualities. He was sincerely attached to her, and she was devoted to him; and now, in his fifty-eighth year, when the troubles following the battle of Jena made him "feel the necessity of drawing all friends closer," who, among those friends, deserved a nearer place than Christiane? He resolved on marrying her.

It is not known whether this thought of marriage had for some time previous been in contemplation, and was now put in execution when Weimar was too agitated to trouble itself with his doings; or whether the desire of legitimising his son in these troublous days suggested the idea. Riemer thinks the motive was gratitude for her courageous and prudent conduct during the troubles; but I do not think that explanation acceptable, the more so as, according to her own statement, marriage was proposed in the early years of their acquaintance. In the absence of positive testimony, I am disposed to rely on psychological evidence; and, assuming that the idea of marriage *had* been previously entertained, the delay in execution is explicable when we are made aware of one peculiarity in his nature, namely, a singular hesitation in adopting any decisive course of action — singular, in a man so resolute and imperious when once his decision had been made. This is the weakness of imaginative men. However strong the volition, when once it is set going, there is in men of active intellects, and especially in men of imaginative, apprehensive intellects, a fluctuation of motives keeping the volition in abeyance, which practically amounts to weakness; and is only distinguished from weakness by the strength of the volition when let

loose. Goethe, who was aware of this peculiarity, used to attribute it to his never having been placed in circumstances which required prompt resolutions, and to his not having educated his will; but I believe the cause lay much deeper, lying in the nature of psychological actions, not in the accidents of education.

But be the cause of the delay this or any other, it is certain that on the 19th of October, *i. e.* five days after the battle of Jena, and *not*, as writers constantly report, "during the cannonade," he was united to Christiane, in the presence of his son, and of his secretary, Riemer.

The scandal which this act of justice excited was immense, as may readily be guessed by those who know the world. His friends, however, loudly applauded his emergence from a false position. From that time forward, no one who did not treat her with proper respect could hope to be well received by him. She bore her new-made honours unobtrusively, and with a quiet good sense, which managed to secure the hearty good will of most of those who knew her.

CHAPTER III.

BETTINA AND NAPOLEON.

It is very characteristic that during the terror and the pillage of Weimar, Goethe's greatest anxiety on his own account was lest his scientific manuscripts should be destroyed. Wine, plate, furniture, could be replaced; but to lose his manuscripts was to lose what was irreparable. Herder's posthumous manuscripts *were* destroyed; Meyer lost everything, even his sketches; but Goethe lost nothing, except wine and money.[1]

The duke, commanded by Prussia to submit to Napoleon, laid down his arms and returned to Weimar, there to be received with the enthusiastic love of his people, as some compensation for the indignities he had endured. Peace was restored. Weimar breathed again. Goethe availed himself of the quiet to print his "Farbenlehre" and "Faust," that they might be rescued from any future peril. He also began to meditate once more an epic on William Tell; but the death of the Duchess Amalia on the 10th of April drove the subject from his mind.

On the 23d of April Bettina came to Weimar. We must pause awhile to consider this strange figure, who

[1] It is at once ludicrous and sad to mention that even *this* has been the subject of malevolent sneers against him. His antagonists cannot forgive him the good fortune which saved *his* house from pillage, when the houses of others were ransacked. They seem to think it a mysterious result of his selfish calculations!

fills a larger space in the literary history of the nineteenth century than any other German woman. Every one knows "the Child" Bettina Brentano, — daughter of the Maximiliane Brentano with whom Goethe flirted at Frankfort in the "Werther" days — wife of Achim von Arnim, the fantastic Romanticist — the worshipper of Goethe and Beethoven — for some time the privileged favourite of the King of Prussia — and writer of that wild, but unveracious book, "Goethe's Correspondence with a Child." She is one of those phantasts to whom everything seems permitted, More elf than woman, yet with flashes of genius which light up in splendour whole chapters of nonsense, she defies criticism, and puts every verdict at fault. If you are grave with her, people shrug their shoulders, and saying, "she is a Brentano," consider all settled. "At the point where the folly of others ceases, the folly of the Brentanos begins," runs a proverb in Germany.

I do not wish to be graver with Bettina than the occasion demands; but while granting fantasy its widest license, while grateful to her for the many picturesque anecdotes she has preserved from the conversation of Goethe's mother, I must consider the history of her relation to Goethe seriously, because out of it has arisen a charge against his memory very false and injurious. Many unsuspecting readers of her book, whatever they may think of the passionate expressions of her love for Goethe, whatever they may think of her demeanour toward him, on first coming into his presence, feel greatly hurt at his coldness; while others are still more indignant with him for keeping alive this mad passion, feeding it with poems and compliments, and doing this out of a selfish calculation, in order that *he might gather from her letters materials for his poems!* In both these views there is complete misconception of the actual case. True it is that the "Correspondence" furnishes ample evidence for

both opinions; and against that evidence there is but one fact to be opposed, but the fact is decisive: the "Correspondence" is a romance.

A harsher phrase would be applied were the offender a man, or not a Brentano, for the romance is put forward as biographical fact; not as fiction playing around and among fact. How much is true, how much exaggeration, and how much pure invention, I am in no position to explain. But Riemer, the old and trusted friend of Goethe, living in the house with him at the time of Bettina's arrival, has shown the "Correspondence" to be a "romance which has only borrowed from reality the time, place, and circumstances;" and from other sources I have learned enough to see both Goethe's conduct and her own in quite a different light from that presented in her work.

A young, ardent, elfin creature worships the great poet at a distance, writes to tell him so, is attentive to his mother, who gladly hears praises of her son, and is glad to talk of him. He is struck with her extraordinary mind, is grateful to her for the attentions to his mother, and writes as kindly as he can without compromising himself. She comes to Weimar. She falls into his arms, and according to her not very credible account, goes to sleep in his lap on their first interview; and is ostentatious of her adoration and her jealousy ever afterward. If true, the position was very embarrassing for Goethe: a man aged fifty-eight worshipped by a girl who, though a woman in years, looked like a child, and worshipped with the extravagance, partly mad, and partly wilful, of a Brentano — *what* could he do? He could take a base advantage of her passion; he could sternly repress it; or he could smile at it, and pat her head as one pats a whimsical, amusing child. These three courses were open to him, and only these. He adopted the last, until she forced him to adopt the second; forced him

by the very impetuosity of her adoration. At first the child's coquettish, capricious ways amused him; her bright-glancing intellect interested him; but when her demonstrations became obtrusive and fatiguing, she had to be "called to order" so often, that at last his patience was fairly worn out. The continuation of such a relation was obviously impossible. She gave herself the license of a child, and would not be treated as a child. She fatigued him.[1]

Riemer relates that during this very visit she complained to him of Goethe's coldness. This coldness, he rightly says, was simply patience; a patience which held out with difficulty against such assaults. Bettina quitted Weimar, to return in 1811, when by her own conduct she gave him a reasonable pretext for breaking off the connection; a pretext, I am assured, he gladly availed himself of. It was this. She went one day with Goethe's wife to the Exhibition of Art, in which Goethe took great interest; and there her satirical remarks, especially on Meyer, offended Christiane, who spoke sharply to her. High words rose, gross insult followed. Goethe took the side of his insulted wife, and forbade Bettina the house. It was in vain that on a subsequent visit to Weimar she begged Goethe to receive her. He was resolute. He had put an end to a relation which could not be a friendship, and was only an embarrassment.[2]

Such being the real story, as far as I can disentangle it, we have now to examine the authenticity of the "Correspondence" in as far as it gives support to the two charges: 1st, of Goethe's alternate coldness and tender-

[1] See the severe mention of her he makes to Kanzler von Müller ("Unterhaltungen," p. 89).

[2] I give this story as it was told me, by an authority quite unexceptionable; nevertheless, in all such narratives there is generally some inaccuracy, even when relating to contemporary events, and the details above given may not be absolutely precise, although the net result certainly is there expressed.

ness; 2d, of his using her letters as material for his poems. That he was ever tender to her, is denied by Riemer, who pertinently asks how we are to believe that the coldness, of which she complained during her visit to Weimar, grew in her absence into the lover-like warmth glowing in the sonnets addressed to her? This is not credible; but the mystery is explained by Riemer's distinct denial that the sonnets were addressed to her. They were *sent* to her, as to other friends; but the poems which she says were inspired by her, were in truth written for another. The proof is very simple. These sonnets were written before she came to Weimar, and had already passed through Riemer's hands, like other works for his supervision. Riemer moreover knew to *whom* these passionate sonnets were addressed, although he did not choose to name her. I have no such cause for concealment, and declare the sonnets to have been addressed to Minna Herzlieb, of whom we shall hear more presently; as indeed the charade on her name, which closes the series (*Herz-Lieb*) plainly indicates. Not only has Bettina appropriated the sonnets which were composed at Jena, while Riemer was with Goethe, and inspired by one living at Jena, but she has also appropriated poems know by Riemer to have been written in 1813–19, she then being the wife of Achim von Arnim, and having since 1811 been resolutely excluded from Goethe's house. To shut your door against a woman, and yet write love verses to her; to respond so coldly to her demonstrations that she complains of it, and yet pour forth sonnets throbbing with passion, is a course of conduct certainly not credible on evidence such as the "Correspondence with a Child." Hence we are the less surprised to find Riemer declaring that some of her letters are "little more than meta- and paraphrases of Goethe's poems, *in which both rhythm and rhyme are still traceable.*" So that, instead of Goethe turning her letters into

poems, Riemer accuses her of turning Goethe's poems into her letters. An accusation so public and so explicit — an accusation which ruined the whole authenticity of the "Correspondence" — should at once have been answered. The production of the originals with their postmarks might have silenced accusers. But the accusation has been fourteen years before the world and no answer attempted.

Although the main facts had already been published, a perfect uproar followed the first appearance of this chapter in Germany. Some ardent friend of Bettina's opened fire upon me with a pamphlet,[1] which called forth several replies in newspapers and journals;[2] and I believe there are few Germans who now hesitate to acknowledge that the whole correspondence has been so tampered with as to have become, from first to last, a romance. For the sake of any still unconvinced partisans in England, a few evidences of the manipulation which the correspondence has undergone may not be without interest.

In the letter bearing date 1st March, 1807, we read of the King of Westphalia's court, when, unless History be a liar, the kingdom of Westphalia was not even in existence. Goethe's mother, in another letter, speaks of her delight at Napoleon's appearance, — four months before she is known to have set eyes upon him. The letters of Goethe, from November to September, all imply that he was at Weimar; nay, he invites her to Weimar on the 16th July; she arrives there at the end of the month; visits him, and on the 16th August he writes to her from thence. Düntzer truly says, that these letters *must* be spurious, since Goethe left for Karlsbad on the 25th May, and did not return till

[1] "An G. H. Lewes: Eine Epistel von Heinrich Siegfried." Berlin, 1858.

[2] See in particular the article by Düntzer: *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20th April, 1858.

September. Not only does Bettina visit Goethe at Weimar at a time when he is known to have been in Bohemia; but she actually receives letters from his mother dated the 21st Sept. and the 7th Oct., 1808, although the old lady died on the 13th Sept. Nay, the only opportunity which the public has had of comparing the letters printed by Bettina with the originals they profess to represent, has disclosed the most audacious transformations and additions. And the letter in which the visit of Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant to the Frau Rath is described by Bettina with such graphic skill that it has been accepted everywhere as a bit of history, is proved to be a fiction from beginning to end, Bettina herself not having been at Frankfort at that time.

One may overlook Bettina's intimating that she was only thirteen, when the parish register proves her to have been two-and-twenty; but it is impossible to place the slightest reliance on the veracity of a book which exhibits flagrant and careless disregard of facts; and if I have been somewhat merciless in the exposure of this fabrication, it is because it has greatly helped to disseminate false views respecting a very noble nature.

In conclusion, it is but necessary to add, that Bettina's work thus deprived of its authenticity, all those hypotheses which have been built on it respecting Goethe's conduct, fall to the ground. Indeed, when one comes to think of it, the hypothesis of his using her letters as poetic materials does seem the wildest of all figments; for, not only was he prodigal in invention and inexhaustible in material, but he was especially remarkable for always expressing his own feelings, his own experience, not the feelings and experience of others.

We part here from Bettina; another and very different figure enters on the scene: Napoleon at the con-

gress of Erfurt. It was in September, 1808, that the meeting of the Emperors of France and Russia, with all the minor potentates forming the *cortège*, took place at the little town of Erfurt, a few miles from Weimar. It was a wonderful sight. The theatre was opened, with Talma and the Parisian troupe, performing the finest tragedies of France before a parterre of kings. "Exactly in front of the pit sat the two emperors, in armchairs, in familiar conversation; a little in their rear, the kings; and then the reigning princes and hereditary princes. Nothing was seen in the whole pit but uniforms, stars, and orders. The lower boxes were filled with staff officers and the most distinguished persons of the Imperial bureaux; the upper front with princesses; and at their sides foreign ladies. A strong guard of grenadiers of the Imperial Guard was posted at the entrance. On the arrival of either emperor the drum beat thrice; on that of any king, twice. On one occasion the sentinel, deceived by the outside of the King of Würtemberg's carriage, ordered the triple salute to be given, on which the officer in command cried out, in an angry tone, *Taisez-vous — ce n'est qu'un roi!*"[1]

Napoleon, on this occasion, gave a friendly reception to the Duke of Weimar, and to Goethe and Wieland, with whom he talked about literature and history. Goethe went to Erfurt on the 29th of September, and that evening saw "Andromaque" performed. On the 30th, there was a grand dinner given by the duke, and in the evening "Britannicus" was performed. In the *Moniteur* of the 8th of October he is mentioned among the illustrious guests: "Il paraît apprécier parfaitement nos acteurs, et admirer surtout les chefs-d'œuvre qu'ils représentent." On the 2d of October he was summoned to an audience with the emperor, and found

[1] Kanzler von Müller, in Mrs. Austin's "Germany from 1760 to 1814," p. 407.

him at breakfast, Talleyrand and Daru standing by his side: Berthier and Savary behind. Napoleon, after a fixed look, exclaimed: "*Vous êtes un homme;*" a phrase which produced a profound impression on the flattered poet. "How old are you?" asked the emperor. "Sixty." "You are very well preserved." After a pause — "You have written tragedies?" Here Daru interposed, and spoke with warmth of Goethe's works, adding that he had translated Voltaire's "Mahomet." "It is not a good piece," said Napoleon, and commenced a critique on "Mahomet," especially on the unworthy portrait given of that conqueror of a world. He then turned the conversation to "Werther," which he had read seven times, and which accompanied him to Egypt. "After various remarks, all very just," says Goethe, "he pointed out a passage and asked me why I had written so: it was contrary to nature. This opinion he developed with great clearness. I listened calmly, and smilingly replied that I did not know whether the objection had ever been made before, but that I found it perfectly just. The passage was unnatural; but perhaps the poet might be pardoned for the artifice which enabled him to reach his end in an easier, simpler way. The emperor seemed satisfied and returned to the drama, and criticised it like a man who has studied the tragic stage with the attention of a criminal judge, and who was keenly alive to the fault of the French in departing from nature. He disapproved of all pieces in which fate played a part. 'Ces pièces appartiennent à une époque obscure. Au reste, que veulent-ils dire avec leur fatalité? La politique est la fatalité.'"

The interview lasted nearly an hour. Napoleon inquired after his children and family; was very gracious; and wound up almost every sentence with "*Qu'en dit M. Goet?*" As Goethe left the room, Napoleon repeated to Berthier and Daru, "*Voilà un homme!*"

Goethe's Interview with Napoleon at Erfurt

Photogravure from the painting by Hillemacher

A few days after Napoleon was in Weimar, and great festivities were set on foot to honour him; among them a *chasse* on the battle-field of Jena; a grand ball at court; and "La Mort de César" at the theatre, with Talma as Brutus. During the ball, Napoleon talked at great length with Goethe and Wieland. Speaking of ancient and modern literature, Napoleon touched on Shakespeare, whom he was too French to comprehend, and said to Goethe: "Je suis étonné qu'un grand esprit, comme vous, n'aime pas les genres tranchés." Goethe might have replied that *les grands esprits* have almost universally been the very reverse of *tranchés* in their tastes; but of course it was not for him to controvert the emperor. As Johnson said on a similar occasion: "Sir, it was not for me to bandy words with my sovereign." After speaking magniloquently of tragedy, Napoleon told him he ought to write a "Death of Cæsar," but in a grander style than the tragedy of Voltaire. "Ce travail pourrait devenir la principale tâche de votre vie. Dans cette tragédie il faudrait montrer au monde comment César aurait pu faire le bonheur de l'humanité si on lui avait laissé le temps d'exécuter ses vastes plans." One cannot help thinking of Goethe's early scheme to write "Julius Cæsar," and how entirely opposed it would have been to the *genre tranché* so admired by Napoleon.

A proposition more acceptable than that of writing tragedies at his age was that of accompanying Napoleon to Paris. "Venez à Paris, je l'exige de vous; là vous trouverez un cercle plus vaste pour votre esprit d'observation; là vous trouverez des matières immenses pour vos créations poétiques." He had never seen a great capital like Paris or London, and there was something very tempting in this invitation. F. von Müller says he often spoke with him on the probable expense of the journey, and of the Parisian usages; but the inconvenience of so long a journey (in those

days), and his own advanced age, seem to have checked his desire.

On the 14th of October he and Wieland received the cross of the Legion of Honour — then an honour; and the two emperors quitted Erfurt. Goethe preserved complete silence on all that had passed between him and Napoleon. Indeed when he recorded the interviews, many years later, in the annals of his life, he did so in the most skeleton-like manner. To the oft-repeated question, What was the passage in "Werther" indicated by Napoleon as contrary to Nature? he always returned a playful answer, referring the questioner to the book, on which to exercise his own ingenuity in discovery. He would not even tell Eckermann. He was fond, in this later period of his life, of playing hide-and-seek with readers, and enjoyed their efforts to unravel mysteries. The present mystery has been cleared up by the Chancellor von Müller, to whom we owe most of the details respecting this Napoleon interview. The objection raised by Napoleon was none other than the objection raised by Herder when "Werther" was revised by him in 1782, — viz., that Werther's melancholy, which leads him to suicide, instead of proceeding solely from frustrated love, is complicated by his frustrated ambition. Herder thought this a fault in art, Napoleon thought it contrary to Nature; and, strange to say, Goethe agreed with both, and altered his work in obedience to Herder's criticism, though he forgot all about it when Napoleon once more brought the objection forward. Against Herder, Napoleon, and Goethe himself, it is enough to oppose the simple fact: Werther (*i. e.* Jerusalem) *was* suffering from frustrated ambition, as well as from frustrated love; and what Goethe found him, that he made him. We have only to turn to Kestner's letter, describing Jerusalem and his unhappy story, to see that Goethe, in "Werther," followed with the

utmost fidelity the narrative which was given him. This anecdote affords a piquant commentary on the value of criticism; three men so illustrious as Napoleon, Goethe, and Herder, pointing to a particular treatment of a subject so contrary to Art and contrary to Nature; the treatment being all the while strictly in accordance with Nature.

That he was extremely flattered by the attentions of Napoleon has been the occasion of a loud outcry from those who, having never been subjected to any flattery of this nature, find it very contemptible. But the attentions of a Napoleon were enough to soften in their flattery even the sternness of a republican; and Goethe, no republican, was all his life very susceptible to the gratification which a Frankfort citizen must feel in receiving the attention of crowned heads. There is infinite insincerity uttered on this subject; and generally the outcry is loudest from men who would themselves be most dazzled by court favour of any kind. To hear them talk of Goethe's servility and worship of rank, one might fancy that they stood on a moral elevation, looking down upon him with a superior pity which in some sort compensated their inferiority of intellect. There is one anecdote which they are very fond of quoting, and which I will therefore give, that we may calmly consider what is its real significance. Beethoven, writing to Bettina in 1812, when he made Goethe's acquaintance in Töplitz, says: "Kings and princes can, to be sure, make professors, privy councillors, etc., and confer titles and orders, but they cannot make great men — minds which rise above the common herd — these they must not pretend to make, and therefore must these be held n honour. When two men, such as Goethe and I, come together, even the high and mighty perceive what is to be considered great in men like us. Yesterday, on our way home, we met the whole Imperial

Family. We saw them coming from a distance, and Goethe separated from me to stand aside: say what I would, I could not make him advance another step. *I pressed my hat down upon my head, buttoned up my greatcoat, and walked with folded arms through the thickest of the throng.* Princes and pages formed a line, the Archduke Rudolph took off his hat, and the empress made the first salutation. Those gentry know me. I saw to my real amusement the procession file past Goethe. He stood aside with his hat off, bending lowly. I rallied him smartly for it; I gave him no quarter."[1]

This anecdote is usually quoted as evidence of Beethoven's independence and Goethe's servility. A very little consideration will make us aware that Beethoven was ostentatiously rude in the assertion of his independence, and that Goethe was simply acting on the dictates of common courtesy in standing aside and taking off his hat, as all Germans do when royalty passes them. It is as much a matter of courtesy to stand still, and take off the hat, when a royal personage passes in carriage or on foot, as it is to take off the hat when an acquaintance passes. Beethoven might choose to ignore all such courtesies; indeed his somewhat eccentric nature would not move in conventional orbits; and his disregard of such courtesies might be pardoned as the caprices of an eccentric nature; but Goethe was a man of the world, a man of courtesies, and a minister; to have folded his arms, and pressed down his hat upon his head, would have been a rudeness at variance with his nature, his education, his position, and his sense of propriety.

It is possible, nay probable, that the very education Goethe had received may have given to his salutation a more elaborate air than was noticeable in other

[1] Schindler's "Life of Beethoven," edited by Moscheles, vol. i. pp. 133–135.

bystanders. In bowing, he may have bowed very low, with a certain formality of respect, for I have no wish to deny that he did lay stress on conventional distinctions. Not only was he far from republican sternness, but he placed more value on his star and title of Excellency than his thoroughgoing partisans are willing to admit. If that be a weakness, let him he credited with it; but if he were as vain of such puerilities as an English duke is of the Garter, I do not see any cause for serious reproach in it. So few poets have been Excellencies, so few have worn stars on their breasts, that we have no means of judging whether Goethe's vanity was greater or less than we have a right to expect. Meanwhile it does seem to me that sneers at his title, and epigrams on his stars, come with a very bad grace from a nation which is laughed at for nothing more frequently than for its inordinate love of titles. Englishmen indeed are not so remarkable for their indifference to rank, that they are the fittest censors of such weakness in a Goethe.

CHAPTER IV.

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES.

AMONG the Jena friends whom Goethe saw with constant pleasure was Frommann, the bookseller, in whose family there was an adopted child, by name Minna Herzlieb, strangely interesting to us as the original of Ottilie in the "Wahlverwandtschaften." As a child she had been a great pet of Goethe's; growing into womanhood, she exercised a fascination over him which his reason in vain resisted. The disparity of years was great: but how frequently are young girls found bestowing the bloom of their affections on men old enough to be their fathers! and how frequently are men at an advanced age found trembling with the passion of youth! In the Sonnets addressed to her, and in the novel of "Elective Affinities," may be read the fervour of his passion, and the strength with which he resisted it. Speaking of this novel, he says: "No one can fail to recognise in it a deep passionate wound which shrinks from being closed by healing, a heart which dreads to be cured. . . . In it, as in a burial-urn, I have deposited with deep emotion many a sad experience. The 3d of October, 1809 (when the publication was completed), set me free from the work; but the feelings it embodies can never quite depart from me." If we knew as much of the circumstances out of which grew the "Elective Affinities," as we do of those out of which grew "Werther," we should find his experience as clearly embodied in this novel as it is in

"Werther;" but conjecture in such cases being perilous, I will not venture beyond the facts which have been placed at my disposal; and may only add therefore that the growing attachment was seen by all with pain and dismay, because, not to mention the disparity of their ages, there was the fact of his own marriage staring him and them in the face. Had he not already placed it beyond his power to marry her, who knows to what his passion might not have hurried him? And although divorce is easy in Germany, and the idea may have crossed his mind, yet we see from the tragedy of the "Wahlverwandtschaften" what his real opinion was on such an immoral issue. The marriage of her younger sister was seized as the occasion of getting her away from Jena, and the dangerous intimacy with Goethe. (In the novel Ottilie is got rid of by sending her to school.) She only returned to Jena as the betrothed wife of a young professor, whom however she did *not* marry. Not until 1821 did she become a wife — and a wretched one, according to Stahr, who first made public this strange story.[1] It was probably her poverty and loneliness which at the age of two and thirty made her accept the hand of a man twenty years her senior, horribly ugly, and intellectually narrow, though honourable and honoured for his private worth. It is said that she was persuaded to overcome her repugnance and to accept him by the insistent advice of her protectress, Frau Frommann; it is certain that she quitted her husband's roof almost immediately after the marriage, and never returned to him. She had become deranged, and died in a lunatic asylum July, 1865, in her 76th year.

It is very curious to read "Die Wahlverwandtschaften," by this light; to see not only the sources of its inspiration, but the way in which Goethe drama-

[1] Adolf Stahr: "Goethe's Frauengestalten," 3te Auflage, 1870, ii. 261 seq.

tises the two halves of his own character. Eduard and Charlotte loved each other in youth. Circumstances separated them; and each made a *mariage de convenance* from which, after a time, they were released by death. The widower and the widow, now free to choose, naturally determine on fulfilling the dream of their youth. They marry. At the opening of the story we see them placidly happy. Although a few quiet touches make us aware of a certain disparity between their natures, not enough to create unhappiness but enough to prevent perfect sympathy, the keenest eye would detect no signs which threatened the enduring stability of their happiness. Eduard has a friend, almost a brother, always called "The Captain," whom he invites to come and live with them. Charlotte strongly opposes this visit at first, having a dim presentiment of evil; but she yields, the more so as she desires that her adopted daughter, Ottilie, should now be taken from school and come to live with them.

Thus are the four actors in the drama brought together on the stage; and no sooner are they brought together than the natural *elective affinities* of their natures come into play. Charlotte and the Captain are drawn together; Eduard and Ottilie are drawn together. This is shown to be as inevitable as the chemical combinations which give the novel its title. A real episode in the tragedy of life is before us; felt to be inevitable; felt to be terrible; felt also to present a dilemma to the moral judgment on which two parties will pronounce two opposite opinions.

Those critics who look at human life, and consequently at Art, from the abstract point of view, who, disregarding fact and necessity, treat human nature as a chess-board, on which any moves may be made which the player chooses, the player himself being considered an impersonal agent, untroubled by rashness, incapable of overlooking what is palpable to the bystanders,

— those critics, I say, will unhesitatingly pronounce the situation an immoral situation, which the poet should not have presented, since in real life it would at once have been put an end to by the idea of Duty.

Others, again, who accept the wondrous complexity of impulses, and demand that Art should represent these, consider this situation as terribly true, and although tragic, by no means immoral; for the tragedy lies in the collision of Passion with Duty — of Impulse with Social Law. Suppose Charlotte and Eduard unmarried, and these "affinities" would have been simple impulses to marriage. But the fact of marriage stands as a barrier to the impulses: the collision is inevitable.

The divergence of opinion, here indicated, must necessarily exist among the two great classes of readers. Accordingly in Germany and in England the novel is alternately pronounced immoral and profoundly moral. I do not think it is either the one or the other. When critics rail at it, and declare it saps the whole foundation of marriage, and when critics enthusiastically declare it is profoundly moral because it sets the sacredness of marriage in so clear a light, I see that both have drawn certain general conclusions from an individual case; but I do not see that they have done more than put *their* interpretations on what the author had no intention of being interpreted at all. Every work of Art has its moral, says Hegel; but the *moral depends on him that draws it.* Both the conclusions against marriage, and the conclusion in favour of marriage, may therefore be drawn from this novel; and yet neither conclusion be correct — except as the private interpretation of the reader. Goethe was an Artist, not an Advocate; he painted a true picture, and, because he painted it truly, he necessarily presented it in a form which would permit men to draw from it those opposite conclusions which might be drawn from

the reality itself. Suppose the story actually to have passed before our eyes the judgments passed on it, even among those thoroughly acquainted with all the facts, would have been diametrically opposite. It is not difficult to write a story carrying the moral legible in every page; and if the writer's object be primarily that of illustrating a plain moral, he need not trouble himself about truth of character. And for this reason: he employs character as a *means* to an end, he does not make the delineation of character his end; his purpose is didactic, not artistic. Quite otherwise is the artist's purpose and practice; for him human life is the end and aim; for him the primary object is character, which is, as all know, of a mingled woof, good and evil, virtue and weakness, truth and falsehood, woven inextricably together.

Those who object to such pictures, and think that truth is no warrant, may reasonably consider Goethe blamable for having chosen the subject. But he chose it because he had experienced it. And once grant him the subject, it is difficult to blame his treatment of it, as regards the social problem. He did his utmost to present this truthfully.

There is, it is true, one scene, which, although true to nature, profoundly true, is nevertheless felt to be objectionable on moral and æsthetical grounds. The artist is not justified in painting every truth; and if we in this nineteenth century often carry our exclusion of subjects to the point of prudery, that error is a virtue compared with the demoralising license exhibited in French literature. The scene I refer to has probably roused more indignation against the "Wahlverwandtschaften" than all the rest of the book.

It is a painful story. Two of the actors represent Passion in its absorbing, reckless, irresistible fervour, rushing onward to the accomplishment of its aims. The two other actors represent, with equal force, and

with touching nobleness, the idea of Duty. Eduard and Ottilie love rapidly, vehemently, thoughtlessly. Not a doubt troubles them. Their feeling is so natural, it so completely absorbs them, that they are like two children entering on a first affection. But vividly as they represent Instinct, Charlotte and the Captain as vividly represent Reason; their love is equally profound, but it is the love of two rational beings, who, because they reason, reason on the circumstances in which they are placed; recognise society, its arrangements and its laws; and sacrifice their own desires to this social necessity. They subdue themselves; upheld by Conscience they face suffering; Conscience dictates to them a line of conduct never dreamt of by the passionate Eduard, and but vaguely apprehended by Ottilie.

Eduard no sooner knows that he is in love than he is impatient for a divorce, which will enable him to marry Ottilie, and enable Charlotte to marry the Captain. Unfortunately Charlotte, who has hitherto had no children by Eduard, feels that she is about to be a mother. This complicates a position which before was comparatively simple. Childless, she might readily have consented to a divorce; she cannot now. Every argument fails to persuade Eduard to relinquish the one purpose of his life; and he only consents to test by absence the durability of his passion.

He joins the army, distinguishes himself in the field, and returns with desires as imperious as ever; meanwhile the Captain has also absented himself. Charlotte bears her fate, meekly, nobly. Ottilie in silence cherishes her love for Eduard, and devotes herself with intense affection to Charlotte's child. This child, in accordance with a popular superstition (which, by the way, physiology emphatically discredits), resembles in a striking manner both Ottilie and the Captain, thus physically typifying the passion

felt by Eduard for Ottilie, and the passion felt by Charlotte for the Captain.

Charlotte, who is strong enough to bear her fate, never relinquishes the hope that Eduard will learn to accept his with like fortitude. But he remains immovable. Opposition only intensifies his desire. At length the child is drowned while under Ottilie's charge. In the depth of her affliction a light breaks in upon her soul; and now, for the first time, Ottilie becomes conscious of being wrong in her desire to be Eduard's wife. With this consciousness comes a resolution never to be his. The tragedy deepens. She wastes away. Eduard, whose passion was his life, lingers awhile in mute sorrow, and then is laid to rest by her side.

Such, in its leading motives, is the terribly tragic drama which Goethe has worked out with indefatigable minuteness in "Die Wahlverwandtschaften." The story moves slowly, as in life, through various episodes and circumstances; but if slow, it is always intelligible.

We need only a hint of the origin of this story to read in it how Goethe has represented himself under the two different masks of the impulsive Eduard, and the reasonable strong-willed Captain. These characters are drawn from the life, drawn from himself. Considered only as characters in a novel, they are masterly creations. Eduard — weak, passionate, and impatient — still preserves our interest even in his weakest moments. How admirable a touch is that where, in the early uneasiness of his position, he hears of the Captain's having criticised his flute playing, and "at once feels himself freed from every obligation of duty!" It is precisely these passionate natures which leap at any excuse, no matter how frivolous, that they may give them the semblance of justification. Charlotte and the Captain stand as representatives of Duty and Reason, in contrast with Ottilie and Eduard, who

represent Impulse and Imagination; in the two reasonable personages Goethe has achieved the rare success of making reason lovable.

Rosenkranz has noticed how well the various forms of marriage are represented in this novel. Eduard and Charlotte each tried *mariage de convenance;* they then tried a *marriage of friendship;* if the former was unhappy, the latter was not sufficing: it was not the *marriage of love.* Moreover in the liaison of the count and the baroness, we see marriage as it is so often found in the world — as a mere convention conventionally respected. Hence the count is painted as a frivolous careless man of fashion, who plays with St. Simonian theories, and thinks marriage ought to be an apprenticeship terminable every five years.

Besides such points, the critic will note admiringly how the characters present themselves in thought, speech and act, without any description or explanation from the author. The whole representation is so objective, so simple, and the march of the story is so quiet, moving amid such familiar details, that except in the masterpieces of Miss Austen, I know not where to look for a comparison. And if English and French readers sometimes feel a little wearied by the many small details which encumber the march of the story, and irritate the curiosity which is impatient for the dénouement, no such weariness is felt by German readers, who enjoy the details, and the purpose which they are supposed to serve. A great writer, and one very dear to me, thinks that the long episodes which interrupt the progress of the story during the interval of Eduard's absence and return, are artistic devices for impressing the reader with a sense of the slow movement of life; and, in truth, it is only in fiction that the dénouement usually lies close to the exposition. I give this opinion, for the reader's consideration; but it seems to me more ingenious than

just. I must confess that the stress Goethe lays on the improvements of the park, the erection of the moss hut, the restoration of the chapel, the making of new roads, etc., is out of all proportion, and somewhat tedious. Julian Schmidt calls attention to the inartistic device of dragging in pages of detached aphorisms and reflections on life under the pretence of their being extracts from Ottilie's journal. The pretence of a connection — namely, the "red thread" — which is to run through these extracts, and exhibit the development of her feelings, is entirely lost sight of, and instead of the feelings of an impassioned girl, we have the thoughts of an old man. The original intention was simply to write a *novelle*, a little tale; and for that there was abundant material. In expanding the *novelle* into a novel, he has spoiled a masterpiece. Indeed, I must frankly say that, either from want of constructive instinct, or from an indolent and haughty indifference toward the public, his novels are quite unworthy of a great artist in point of *composition*. He seems to have regarded them as vehicles for the expression of certain views, rather than as organic wholes.

The style of "Die Wahlverwandtschaften" is greatly admired by Germans; Rosenkranz pronounces it classical. We must remember, however, that Germany is not rich in works written with the perfection which France and England demand; we must remember, moreover, that most German opinions on Goethe are to be received with the same caution as English opinions about Shakespeare; and bearing these two facts in mind, we shall lend a more willing ear to those native critics who do not regard the style of the "Wahlverwandtschaften" as classical. It is a delicate point for a foreigner to venture on an opinion in such a case; and if I wrote for Germans, I should simply quote the current verdict; but writing for Englishmen who read German, there may be less temerity in alluding to the

signs of age which the style of this novel betrays. Englishmen comparing this prose with the prose of his earlier works, or with the standard of admirable prose — and so great a writer must only be measured by the highest standards — will find it often weak, cold, mechanical in the construction of its sentences, and somewhat lifeless in the abstractness of its diction. There is also a fatiguing recurrence of certain set forms of phrase. Passages of great beauty there are, touches of poetry no reader will overlook. The last chapter is a poem. Its pathos is so simple that one needs to be in robust mood to read it. The page also where Charlotte and the Captain are on the lake together under the faint light of appearing stars, is a poem the music of which approaches that of verse.

CHAPTER V.

POLITICS AND RELIGION.

GOETHE long carried the arrow in his heart. In 1810, he once more gave poetic expression to his experience in an erotic poem, setting forth the conflict of Love and Duty. The nature of this poem, however, prevented its publication, and it still exists only as a manuscript. In this year also he commenced his Autobiography, the first part of which appeared in 1811. The public, anxious for autobiography, received it with a disappointment which is perfectly intelligible; charming as the book is in every other respect, it is tantalising to a reader curious to see the great poet in his youth.

Before writing this Autobiography, he had to outlive the sorrow for his mother's death. She died on the 13th of September, 1808, in her seventy-eighth year. To the last, her love for her son, and his for her, had been the glory and sustainment of her happy old age. He had wished her to come and live with him at Weimar; but the circle of old Frankfort friends, and the influence of old habits, kept her in her native city, where she was venerated by all.

A volume would be required to record with anything like fulness the details of the remaining years. There is no deficiency of material: in his letters, and the letters of friends and acquaintances, will be found an ample gleaning; but unhappily the materials are abundant precisely at the point where the interest of

the story begins to fade. From sixty to eighty-two is a long period; but it is not a period in which persons and events influence a man; his character, already developed, can receive no new direction. At this period biography is at an end, and necrology begins. For Germans, the details to which I allude have interest; but the English reader would receive with mediocre gratitude a circumstantial narrative of all Goethe did and studied: all the excursions he made; every cold and toothache which afflicted him; every person he conversed with.[1]

I may mention, however, his acquaintance with Beethoven, on account of the undying interest attached to the two names. They were together for a few days at Töplitz, with the most profound admiration for each other's genius. The biographer of Beethoven adds: "But though Beethoven has praised Goethe's patience with him (on account of his deafness), still it is a fact, that the great poet, and minister, too soon forgot the great composer; and when, in 1823, he had it in his power to render him an essential service with little trouble to himself, he did not even deign to reply to a very humble epistle from our master." This is the way accusations are made; this is the kind of evidence on which they are believed. The only *facts* here established are, that Beethoven wrote to Goethe, and that Goethe did not reply. Beethoven's letter requested Goethe to recommend the grand duke to subscribe to his Mass. It was doubtless very mortifying not to receive a reply; such things always are mortifying, and offended self-love is apt to suggest bad motives for the offence. But a bystander, knowing how many motives may actuate the conduct, and un-

[1] The period which is included in this Seventh Book occupies no less than 563 pages, of Viehoff's Biography; yet while I have added a great many details to those collected by Viehoff, I do not think any of interest have been omitted.

willing to suppose a bad motive for which there is no evidence, will at once see that the inferences of Goethe's "not deigning to reply," and of having "forgotten the great composer," are by no means warranted by the facts. We know that Goethe was naturally of an active benevolence; we know that he was constantly recommending to the grand duke some object of charitable assistance: we know that he profoundly admired Beethoven, and had no cause to be offended with him; and, knowing this, we must accept any interpretation of the fact of silence in preference to that which the angry Beethoven, and his biographer, have inferred.

To pursue our narrative: The year 1813, which began the War of Independence, was to Goethe a year of troubles. It began with an affliction — the death of his old friend Wieland; which shook him more than those who knew him best were prepared for. Herder; Schiller; the Duchess Amalia; his mother; and now Wieland, — one by one had fallen away, and left him lonely, advancing in years.

Nor was this the only source of unhappiness. Political troubles came to disturb his plans. Germany was rising against the tyranny of Napoleon; rising, as Goethe thought, in vain. "You will not shake off your chains," he said to Körner; "the man is too powerful; you will only press them deeper into your flesh." His doubts were shared by many: but happily the nation shared them not. While patriots were rousing the wrath of the nation into the resistance of despair, he tried to "escape from the present, because it is impossible to live in such circumstances and not go mad;" he took refuge, as he always did, in Art. He wrote the ballads "Der Todtentanz," "Der getreue Eckart," and "Die wandelnde Glocke;" wrote the essay "Shakespeare und kein Ende," and finished the third volume of his Autobiography. He buried him-

self in the study of Chinese history. Nay, on the very day of the battle of Leipsic, he wrote the epilogue to the tragedy of "Essex," for the favourite actress, Madame Wolf.[1]

Patriotic writers are unsparing in sarcasms on a man who could thus seek refuge in Poetry from the bewildering troubles of politics, and they find no other explanation than that he was an Egoist. Other patriotic writers, among them some of ultra-republicanism, such as Karl Grün, have eloquently defended him. I do not think it necessary to add arguments to those already suggested respecting his relation to politics. Those who are impatient with him for being what *he* was, and not what *they* are, will listen to no arguments. It is needless to point out how, at sixty-four, he was not likely to become a politician, having up to that age sedulously avoided politics. It is needless to show that he was not in a position which called upon him to *do* anything. The grievance seems to be that he wrote no war songs, issued no manifestos, but strove to keep himself as much as possible out of the hearing of contemporary history. If this was a crime, the motive was not criminal. Judge the act as you will, but do not misjudge the motive. To attribute such an act to cowardice, or fear of compromising himself, is unwarrantable, in the face of all the evidence we have of his character.

When the mighty Napoleon threatened the grand duke, we have seen how Goethe was roused. That was an individual injustice, which he could clearly understand, and was prepared to combat. For the duke he would turn Ballad-singer; for the Nation he had no voice; and why? Because there was no Nation. He saw clearly then, what is now seen clearly,

[1] Curiously enough, on that very day of Napoleon's first great defeat, his medallion, which was hung on the wall of Goethe's study, fell from its nail to the ground.

that Germany had no existence as a nation:[1] it was a geographical fiction; and such it remained until 1871. And he failed to see what is now clearly seen, that the German Peoples were, for the time, united by national enthusiasm, united by a common feeling of hatred against France; failing to see this, he thought that a collection of disunited Germans was certain to be destroyed in a struggle with Napoleon. He was wrong; the event has proved his error; but his error of opinion must not be made an accusation against his sincerity. When Luden the historian, whose testimony is the weightier because it is that of a patriot, had that interview with him, after the battle of Leipsic, which he has recorded with so much feeling,[2] the impression left was, he says, "that I was deeply convinced they are in grievous error who blame Goethe for a want of love of country, a want of German feeling, a want of faith in the German people, or of sympathy with its honour and shame, its fortune or misery. His silence about great events was simply a painful resignation, to which he was necessarily led by his position and his knowledge of mankind." Luden came to him to speak of a projected journal, the *Nemesis*, which was to excite the nation's hatred of France. Goethe dissuaded him. "Do not believe," he said, after a pause, "that I am indifferent to the great ideas — Freedom, Fatherland, and People. No: these ideas are in us; they form a portion of our being which no one can cast off. Germany is dear to my heart. I have often felt a bitter pain at the thought that the German people, so honourable as individuals, should be so miserable as a whole. A comparison of the German people with other peoples awakens a painful feeling, which I try to escape in any way I can; and in Art and Science

[1] Compare "Goethe's Unterhaltungen mit dem Kanzler v. Müller," 1870, p. 4.

[2] Luden: "Rückblicke in mein Leben," p. 113 seq.

I have found such escapes; *for they belong to the world at large, and before them vanish all the limits of nationality.* But this consolation is after all but a poor one, and is no compensation for the proud conviction that one belongs to a great, strong, honoured, and dreaded people." He spoke also of Germany's future, but he saw that this future was still far distant. "For us, meanwhile, this alone remains: let every one, according to his talents, according to his tendencies, and according to his position, *do his utmost to increase the culture and development of the people,* to strengthen and widen it on all sides, that the people may not lag behind other peoples, but may become competent for every great action when the day of its glories arrives." Very wise words, however unpalatable to enthusiastic patriotism. He turned from such abstract considerations to the question of the journal, and the probability of "awakening" the German People to Freedom. "But *is* the people awakened?" he continued. "Does it know what it wants and what it wills? Have you forgotten what that honest Philister in Jena said to his neighbour, as in his joy he called out, that the French were departed, and his rooms were ready for the reception of the Russians! The sleep has been too deep for a mere shaking to alter it. And is every agitation an elevation? We are not now considering the cultivated youth, but the many, the millions. And what will be won? Freedom, you say; but perhaps it would be more correct to call it a setting free — *not, however, a setting free from the yoke of foreigners, but from a foreign yoke.* True, I no longer see Frenchmen, no longer see Italians; but *in their place I see Cossacks, Baschkirs, Croats, Magyars, and other Hussars.*"

He who thought thus, was not likely to be found among the enthusiasts of that day, had he been at the age of enthusiasm. But, as he said to Eckermann, who alluded to the reproaches against him for not hav-

ing written war songs, "How could I take up arms without hatred, and how could I hate without youth? If such an emergency had befallen me when twenty years old, I should certainly not have been the last; but it found me past sixty. Besides we cannot all serve our country in the same way, but each does his best according as God has endowed him. I have toiled hard enough during half a century. I can say, that in those things which nature has appointed for my daily work, I have permitted myself no relaxation or repose, but have always striven, investigated, and done as much, and as well, as I could. If every one can say the same of himself, it will prove well with all. To write military songs and sit in a room! That forsooth was my duty! To have written them in the bivouac when the horses at the evening's outposts are heard neighing at night, would have been well enough; that was not my way of life nor my business, but that of Theodore Körner. His war songs suit him perfectly. But to me, who am not of a warlike nature, and who have no warlike sense, war songs would have been a mask which would have fitted my face very badly. I have never affected anything in my poetry. I have never uttered anything which I have not experienced, and which has not urged me to production. I have only composed love songs when I have loved; and could I write songs of hatred without hating?"

Connected with this political indifference, and mainly the cause of it, was his earnestness in Art; an earnestness which has been made the evidence of this most extraordinary charge against him, namely, that he "looked on life only as an artist." The shallow phrase has become stereotyped. Every one has heard it who has heard anything of him. It is uttered with the confidence of conviction, and is meant to convey a volume of implicit reprobation. When a man devotes himself to a special science, gives to it the greater part

of his time, his thoughts and sympathies, we marvel at his energy, and laud his passionate devotion; we do not make his earnestness a crime; we do not say of a Faraday that he "looks at life only as a Chemist;" of an Owen "that he looks at life only as a Zoologist." It is understood that any great pursuit must necessarily draw away the thoughts and activities from other pursuits. Why then is Art to be excluded from the same serious privilege? Why is the artist, who is in earnest, excluded from the toleration spontaneously awarded to the philosopher? I know but of one reason, and that is the indisposition in men to accept Art as serious. Because it ministers directly to our pleasures, Art is looked on as the child of luxury; the product of idleness; and those who cannot rise to the height of the conception which animated a Goethe and a Schiller, are apt to treat it as mere rhetoric and self-importance in men who speak of Art as the noblest form of Culture. Indeed, those who regard Painting and Sculpture as means of supplying their dining-rooms and galleries with costly ornaments, Music as furnishing the excuse for a box at the opera, and Poetry as an agreeable pastime, may be justified in thinking lightly of painters, sculptors, musicians, and poets. But I will not suppose the reader to be one of this class; and may therefore appeal to his truer appreciation for a verdict in favour of the claims made by Art to serious recognition, as one among the many forms of national culture. This granted, it follows that the more earnestly the artist accepts and follows his career, the more honour does he claim from us.

Now Goethe was a man of too profoundly serious a nature not to be in earnest with whatever he undertook; he led an earnest and laborious life, when he might have led one of pleasure and luxurious idleness. "To scorn delights and live laborious days," with no other reward than the reward of activity, the delight of

development, was one of the necessities of his nature. He worked at Science with the patient labour of one who had to earn his bread; and he worked in the face of dire discouragement, with no reward in the shape of pence or praise. In Art, which was the main region of his intellectual strivings, he naturally strove after completeness. If the philosopher is observed drawing materials for his generalisations out of even the frivolities of the passing hour, learning in the theatre, the ballroom, or in the incoherent talk of railway passengers, to detect illustrations of the laws he is silently elaborating, we do not accuse him of looking on life only as a philosopher, thereby implying that he is deficient in the feelings of his race; yet something like this is done by those who make a crime of Goethe's constant endeavour to collect from life material for Art.

If when it is said "he looked on life only as an artist," the meaning is that he, as an artist, necessarily made Art the principal occupation of his life — the phrase is a truism; and if the meaning is that he isolated himself from the labours and pursuits of his fellow men, to play with life, and arrange it as an agreeable drama — the phrase is a calumny. It is only through deep sympathy that a man can become a great artist; those who play with life can only play with Art. The great are serious. That Goethe was a great artist all admit. Has the life we have narrated shown him to be deficient in benevolence, in lovingness, in sympathy with others and their pursuits? has it shown any evidence of a nature so wrapped in self-indulgence, and so coldly calculating, that life *could* become a mere playing to it? If the answer be No, then let us hear no more about Goethe's looking on life only as an artist. The vulgar may blame a devotion which they cannot understand; do not let us imitate the vulgar. "Le monde comprend peu un

pareil stoïcisme," says a thoughtful and sympathetic writer, "et voit souvent une sorte de sécheresse dans l'âpreté de ces grandes âmes, — dures pour elles-mêmes et par conséquent un peu pour les autres, qui ont l'air de se consoler de tout, pourvu que l'univers reste livré à leur contemplation. Mais au fond c'est là le plus haut degré du désintéressement et le plus beau triomphe de l'âme humaine. Ce que la conscience timorée des âmes tendres et vertueuses appelle l'égoisme du génie, n'est d'ordinaire que le détachement des jouissances personnelles et l'oubli de soi pour l'idéal." [1]

While one party has assailed him for his political indifference, another, and still more ungenerous party, has assailed him for what they call his want of religion. The man who can read Goethe's works and not perceive in them a spirit deeply religious, must limit the word religion to the designation of his own doctrines; and the man who, reading them, discovers that Goethe was not orthodox, is discovering the sun at midday. Orthodox he never pretended to be. His attitude toward all particular creeds is well expressed by Schiller in the epigram:

"Welche Religion ich bekenne? Keine von Allen,
Die du mir nennst. Und warum Keine? Aus Religion."

"You ask me to what religion I belong? To none of those you name. And why to none? Because of Religion." Goethe saw that the religious conceptions of the multitude could not be the same as the conceptions of the cultivated, though their religious emotions might be the same. His religious experiences had begun early, and his doubts began with them. There are those who regard Doubt as criminal in itself; but no human soul that has once struggled, that has once been perplexed with baffling thoughts which it

[1] Ernest Renan: "Essais de Morale," p. 138.

has been too sincere to huddle away and stifle in precipitate conclusions, dreading to face the consequences of doubt, will speak thus harshly and unworthily of it:

> "There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds:
> He fought his doubts and gathered strength;
> He would not make his judgment blind;
> He faced the spectres of the mind,
> And laid them: thus he came at length
> To find a stronger faith his own."[1]

The course of his opinions, as we have seen, was often altered. At times he approached the strictness of strict sects; at times he went great lengths in skepticism. The Fräulein von Klettenberg taught him to sympathise with the Moravians; but Lavater's unconscious hypocrisy, and the moral degradation of the Italian priesthood, gradually changed his respect for the Christian Churches into open and sometimes sarcastic contempt of priests and priesthoods. In various epochs of his long life he expressed himself so variously that a pietist may claim him, or a Voltairian may claim him: both with equal show of justice. The secret of this contradiction lies in the fact that he had deep religious sentiments, with complete skepticism on most religious doctrines. Thus, whenever the Encyclopedists attacked Christianity he was ready to defend it;[2] but when he was brought in contact with dogmatic Christians, who wanted to force their creed upon him, he resented the attempt, and answered in the spirit of his skepticism. To the Encyclopedists he would say, "Whatever frees the intellect, without at the same time giving us command over ourselves, is pernicious;"

[1] "In Memoriam."

[2] Abeken was told by a lady that she once heard Goethe soundly rate a respected friend, because she spoke of sacred persons in the tone of vulgar rationalism.

or he would utter one of his profound and pregnant aphorisms, such as:

> "Nur das Gesetz kann uns die Freiheit geben,"

i. e. only within the circle of Law can there be true Freedom. We are not free when we acknowledge no higher power, but when we acknowledge it, and in reverence raise ourselves by proving that a Higher lives in us.

But against dogmatic teachings he opposed the fundamental rule, that all conceptions of the Deity must necessarily be *our* individual conceptions, valid for us, but not to the same extent for others. Each soul has its own religion; must have it as an individual possession; let each see that he be true to it; which is far more efficacious than trying to accommodate himself to another's!

> "Im Innern ist ein Universum auch;
> Daher der Völker löblicher Gebrauch
> Das Jeglicher das Beste was er kennt
> Er Gott, ja seinen Gott benennt."

"I *believe* in God" was, he said, "a beautiful and praiseworthy phrase; but to *recognise* God in all His manifestations, *that* is true holiness on earth." He declared himself in the deepest sense of the word a Protestant, and as such claimed "the right of holding his inner being free from all prescribed dogma, the right of developing himself religiously!" With reference to the genuineness of Scripture, he maintained with the modern Spiritualists that nothing is genuine but what is truly excellent, which stands in harmony with the purest nature and reason, and which even now ministers to our highest development. He looked upon the Four Gospels as genuine, "for there is in them a reflection of a greatness which emanated from the person

of Jesus, and which was of as divine a kind as was ever seen upon earth. If I am asked whether it is in my nature to pay Him devout reverence, I say — certainly! I bow before Him as the divine manifestation of the highest morality. If I am asked whether it is in my nature to reverence the sun, I again say — certainly! For he is likewise a manifestation of the highest Being. I adore in him the light and the productive power of God; by which we all live, move, and have our being. But if I am asked whether I am inclined to bow before a thumb bone of the apostle Peter or Paul, I say — away with your absurdities! . . . Let mental culture go on advancing, let science go on gaining in depth and breadth, and the human intellect expand as it may, it will never go beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity as it shines forth in the Gospels. The mischievous sectarianism of Protestants will one day cease, and with it the hatred between father and son, sister and brother; for as soon as the pure doctrine and love of Christ are comprehended in their true nature, and have become a living principle, we shall feel ourselves great and free as human beings, and not attach special importance to a degree more or less in the outward forms of religion. Besides, we shall all gradually advance from a Christianity of words and faith to a Christianity of feeling and action." He was eighty-two when these words were uttered to Eckermann. Ten years before, he wrote to his old friend the Countess von Stolberg: "I have meant honestly all my life both with myself and others, and in all my earthly strivings have ever looked upward to the Highest. You and yours have done so likewise. Let us continue to work thus while there is daylight for us; for others another sun will shine by which they will work, while for us a brighter Light will shine. And so let us remain untroubled about the future! In our Father's kingdom there are

many provinces, and as He has given us here so happy a resting-place, so will He certainly care for us above; perhaps we shall be blessed with what here on earth has been denied us, to know one another merely by seeing one another, and thence more thoroughly to love one another."

There are two aspects under which religion may be considered: the divine aspect, and the human aspect; in the one it is Theosophy, in the other Ethics. Goethe's Theosophy was that of Spinoza, modified by his own poetical tendencies; it was not a geometrical, but a poetical Pantheism. In it the whole universe was conceived as divine; not as a lifeless mass, but as the living manifestation of Divine Energy ever flowing forth into activity. St. Paul tells us that God lives in everything, and everything in God. Science tells us that the world is always *becoming*. Creation continues. The world was not made, once and for ever, as a thing completed, and afterward serenely contemplated. The world is still a-making. The primal energies of Life are as young and potent as of old, issuing forth under new forms through metamorphoses higher and ever higher, as dawn broadens into day.

Goethe's religion was eminently concrete, and devout in its worship of realities. He believed in fact; he thought Reality in itself holier than any fiction could make it. Human nature was to him a holy fact, and man's body a temple of holiness. This is Hellenic, but its kinship with Spinoza's system is also obvious. Spinoza had no sympathy with those philosophers who deride or vilify human nature: in his opinion it was better to try to understand it; and disregarding the clamours of those who conceived the emotions and actions of human nature to be chaotic and absurd, he analysed its properties as if it had been a mathematical figure. In other words, he inquired without passion, reasoned without foregone conclusions, interrogated the

facts as they presented themselves, and recorded the simple answers.[1] And this did Goethe. He strove above all things to understand fact, because fact was divine manifestation. The mystic change of birth and death — the sweet influences of opening life and orderly development — the restless strivings and the placid rests — the ever-moving shuttles of the "roaring Loom of Time which weaves for God the garment we see Him by" — were to him the "freshly uttered word of God."

Goethe's moral system was intimately connected with this Theosophy. His worship was Nature worship, his moral system an idealisation of Humanity. The human being was the highest manifestation of the Divine on earth, and the highest manifestation of Humanity was therefore the ideal to which morality tended. We must first learn Renunciation; we must learn to limit ourselves to the Possible; in this first restraint lies the germ of self-sacrifice: in giving up claims too high for attainment, we learn to give up claims for the sake of others. True piety springs from human love. "If certain phenomena of nature," he says, "looked at from the moral standing point, force us to assume the existence of a primitive Evil, so on the other hand many phenomena force us to assume a primitive Good. This spring of goodness, when flowing into life, we name *Piety;* as the ancients did, who regarded it as the basis of all virtue. It is the force which counterbalances egoism; and if by a miracle it could for a moment suddenly be active in all men, the earth would at once be free from evil."

It would be no difficult task to select from his works

[1] "Ethices," Pars iii, præfatio: Nam ad illos revertere volo, qui hominum affectus et actiones detestari vel ridere malunt, quam intelligere. His sine dubio mirum videbitur, quod hominum vitia et ineptias more geometrico tractare aggrediar, et certa ratione demonstrare velim ea quæ rationi repugnare, quæque vana, absurda, et horrenda esse clamitant. Sed mea hæc ratio est.

a series of moral propositions of the noblest character; but indeed his works are saturated with a morality such as speaks to every mind not prejudiced, and are even more remarkable for the absence of any mean, grovelling, selfish, and narrow views than for their direct teaching. The cry of "Immorality," which has been sometimes raised against his works, springs from that uncharitableness which denounces every thought not taught by the denouncing sect. If any one can read Goethe's works and not feel the writer to have been one strengthened by noble sentiments and warmed by the purest love for human nature in its most generous forms, I have nothing to add to the words of the spirit in "Faust," —

"*Du gleichst dem Geist den du begreifst,*" —

"You resemble the Spirit which you understand."[1]

Whatever else he has been accused of, he has never been accused of not having striven incessantly to reach a full development of his own being, and to aid the culture of his nation. There is something truly grand in the picture of his later years; so calm, and yet so active. His sympathy, instead of growing cold with age, seems every year to become more active. Every discovery in Science, every new appearance in Litera-

[1] I heard a capital story of Carlyle at a dinner party in Berlin, silencing the cant about Goethe's want of religion, by one of his characteristic sarcasms. For some time he sat quiet, but not patient, while certain pietists were throwing up their eyes, and regretting that so great a genius! so godlike a genius! should not have more purely devoted himself to the service of Christian Truth! and should have had so little, etc. Carlyle sat grim, ominously silent, his hands impatiently twisting his napkin, until at last he broke silence, and in his slow, emphatic way said, "*Meine Herren*, did you never hear the story of that man who vilified the sun because it would not light his cigar?" This bombshell completely silenced the enemy's fire. Not a word was spoken in reply. "I could have kissed him!" exclaimed the enthusiastic artist who narrated the anecdote to me.

ture, every promise in Art, finds him eager as a child to be instructed, and ready with aid or applause to further it.

Old age indeed is a relative term. Goethe at seventy was younger than many men at fifty; and at eighty-two he wrote a scientific review of the great discussion between Cuvier and Geoffroy St. Hilaire on Philosophic Zoology, a review which few men in their prime could write. But there are physiologists who deny that seventy is old age. M. Flourens, for example, maintains that from fifty-five to seventy, man is at his most virile period; and M. Reveillé Parisse, in his work "La Vieillesse," declares that between fifty-five and seventy-five, and sometimes beyond, the mind acquires an extension, a consistence, and a solidity truly remarkable, — "c'est véritablement l'homme ayant atteint toute la hauteur de ses facultés." And the history of Science and Literature furnishes several striking examples of intellectual activity in old age — the activity being doubtless a cause of this prolongation of power. Sophocles, who is said to have written his masterpiece at eighty, is an example of great poetic capacity thus prolonged. The reflective powers often retain their capacity, and by increase of material seem to *increase* it; but not so the productive powers. Yet in Goethe we see extraordinary fertility, even in the latest years; the Second Part of "Faust" was completed in his eighty-first year, and the "West-östliche Divan" was written in his sixty-fifth. Although we cannot by any means consider these works as equal to the works of his earlier days, we must still consider them as marvellous productions to issue under the sunset of a poet.

The "West-östliche Divan" was a refuge from the troubles of the time. Instead of making himself unhappy with the politics of Europe, he made himself happy studying the history and poetry of the East.

He even began to study the Oriental languages, and was delighted to be able to copy the Arabic manuscripts in their peculiar characters. Von Hammer, De Sacy, and other Orientalists had given him abundant material; his poetic activity soon gave that material shape. But while donning the Turban, and throwing the Caftan over his shoulders, he remained a true German. He smoked opium, and drank *Foukah;* but his dreams were German, and his songs were German. This forms the peculiarity of the "Divan" —it is West-Eastern; the images are Eastern; the form and the feeling are Western. Precisely as in the Roman Elegies he had thrown himself into the classical past, reproducing its forms with unsurpassed ease and witchery, yet never for a moment ceasing to be original, never ceasing to be German; so also in this Eastern world we recognise the Western poet. He follows the Caravan slowly across the desert; he hears the melancholy chant of the Bulbul singing on the borders of sparkling fountains; he listens devoutly to the precepts of Mohammed, and rejoices in the strains of Hafis. The combination is most felicitous. It produced an epoch in German Literature. The Lyrists, according to Gervinus, suddenly following this example, at once relinquished their warlike and contemporary tone to sing the songs of the East. Rückert and Platen, following the trace of the German Hafis, wandered among Roses and Ghazels; other poets gladly imitated them. Does it not seem as if there were a natural tendency in the German character to turn the back upon active political life, when we see that in the two great crises of history, in the Crusades and in the War of Independence, the poets fled from the stormy contemplation of their time, seeking inspiration in an order of ideas completely opposed to the time? The Minnesingers, amid the clang of knightly achievements, could only sing of Love and Pleasure; the

modern poets, amid the storms of an European struggle, could find no inspiration but in Romanticism, or in Orientalism. This is the more noticeable because Goethe has been angrily reproached for his flight into the East; although surely the aged poet might find an excuse if the young poets were applauded?

The "West-östliche Divan" is divided into twelve Books: the Singer, Hafis, Love, Contemplation, Sadness, Proverbs, Timour, Suleika, Wine-house, Parables, Persians, and Paradise; very various in contents, and of various excellence. Truly may be applied to Goethe the epigraph he applies to Hafis: "Let us call the World the Bride, and the Spirit will be the Bridegroom; he who has known Hafis had seen this marriage."

> "Sey das Wort die Braut genannt,
> Bräutigam der Geist;
> Diese Hochzeit hat gekannt
> Wer Hafisen preis't."

How much of his own experience he has clothed in these Eastern forms we cannot know; some of the poems have been identified with their occasions, and some of their allusions have been deciphered: in one case, in the "Buch Suleika," he has placed the name of Hatem where the rhyme plainly tells us to read Goethe:

> "Du beschämst, wie Morgenröthe
> Jener Gipfel ernste Wand,
> Und noch einmal fühlet *Hatem*
> Frühlingshauch und Sommerbrand."

The grace with which many of these poems are lightly touched, the admirable wisdom which smiles so serenely under them, the calm, hot, noonday stillness, interchanging with the careless gaiety of the wine-house mirth, cannot be indicated by translation; nor will

I attempt it. For the sake of the German reader, however, here is one brief specimen:

> "Trunken müssen wir alle seyn!
> *Jugend ist Trunkenheit ohne Wein;*
> Trinkt sich das Alter wieder zu Jugend
> So ist es wundervolle Tugend.
> Für Sorgen sorgt das liebe Leben
> Und Sorgenbrecher sind die Reben."

To these poems is added a volume of Historical Notes, which show indeed a conscientious study of the East, but which also show how immeasurably inferior his prose was to his poetry. Age is visible in very page.

And what must be said of the claim set up by Hermann Grimm, respecting the share which he declares Frau Willemer to have, not only in inspiring some of these lyrics, but actually in the composition of them? In the Appendix the reader may see what was thought of this extraordinary claim by the late Emmanuel Deutsch, whose early loss we deplore, and to whose indignant article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Oct. 4, 1869, I need only add two remarks: First, that this claim to the authorship of poems is only a repetition of the absurd claim previously set up by Bettina, which has been sufficiently exposed; and that, if it be allowed on such evidence, to transfer the glory of accomplished works to any one who has the courage to claim them as their own, no reputation can be safe, since every writer has friends, and the public is singularly ready to believe that a great work "was written by somebody else." Secondly, in the absence of very positive evidence, we must be guided by the probabilities, and what probability is there that a woman never known to have written poems in her own name, such as the world could accept as masterpieces — never known indeed as even a feeble poet — should for once in her life have written, for the greatest of modern poets,

poems which all Germany has accepted as his? While there is every evidence that Goethe could have written, and did write, the poems published under his name, there is no evidence whatever that Frau von Willemer could have written the poems she claims to have given him.

I had resolved to take no notice whatever of this preposterous claim, but finding that Gödeke, in his recent biography of the poet, accepts it as established, I could not leave it unrefuted, knowing, as I well know, the facility with which such stories are circulated.

In the early chapters of his Autobiography Goethe had presented a picture of Frankfort, which was very gratifying to the people of that city; and when, in the year 1814, he passed through the city, he was received with an ovation which recalls the last visit of Voltaire to Paris. "Tasso" was performed at the theatre with great pomp. No sooner did he make his appearance in the box which had been prepared for him, and which was hung with flowers and laurel crowns, than Haydn's Symphony struck up, and the whole house rose with a burst of enthusiastic cheering. The Symphony continued, and the shouts rose tumultuously above it. At length the curtain rolled up, and gradually a solemn stillness settled through the house. A prologue greeted the great poet, and was the signal for more shouting. After "Tasso" came an epilogue, during which the laurel crowns were taken from the busts of Ariosto and Tasso, and handed to Goethe. And when all was over, the corridors and staircases of the theatre were crowded with admirers, through whom he passed, smiling his thanks.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ACTIVITY OF AGE.

In the year 1816 he began to publish an Art Journal, *Kunst und Alterthum*, which continued till 1828, a curious monument of the old man's studies and activity. It is curious, moreover, as indicating a change in the direction of his ideas. We have seen what his relation was to the Romantic School, and how the tendencies of his nature and education led him to oppose to the characteristics of that School the characteristics of Greek Art. The *Propyläen* represents the Greek tendency: *Kunst und Alterthum* represents a certain leaning toward the Romantic. Gothic Art, the old German and Netherland painters, no longer seemed to him objectionable; but the discovery of the Elgin marbles once more awakened his enthusiasm for that perfection of form which was the ideal of Greek Art;[1] and I have heard Rauch, the sculptor, humourously narrate Goethe's whimsical outbreaks when the young sculptor Rietschl seemed in danger of perverting his talent by executing designs in the spirit of the Romantic School.

Strong, however, as the opposition was which he felt to the vagaries of the so-called Christian Art, he had too much of the Faust spirit to keep entirely aloof from the Romanticists. In his old age the tendency to substitute Reflection for Inspiration naturally assumed greater force; and his love of mystification was now

[1] See his letter to Haydon, in the "Life of Haydon," vol. ii. p. 295.

wearing a serious aspect, duping himself perhaps as much as it duped others. The German nation had persisted in discovering profound meanings in passages which he had written without any recondite meaning at all; finding himself a prophet when he meant only to be a poet, he gradually fell into the snare, and tried to be a prophet now he could no longer be so great a poet as before. Every incident was to be typical. Every phrase was of importance. Whether the lion should roar at a particular time (in the "Novelle"), or whether he should be silent, were subjects of long deliberation. The "Wanderjahre" was one great arsenal of symbols, the Second Part of "Faust" another. He delighted in seeing the philosophic critics outdoing each other in far-fetched ingenuity, "explaining" his "Faust" and "Meister;" and very astutely he refused to come to their aid. He saw libraries filled with discussions as to what he had intended; but no one ever seduced him into an explanation which would have silenced these discussions. Instead of doing so, he seemed disposed to furnish the world with more riddles. In a word, he mystified the public; but he did so in a grave, unconscious way, with a certain belief in his own mystification.

In the year 1816, Saxe-Weimar was made a grand duchy; and he received the Falcon Order, together with an increase of salary, which now became three thousand thalers, with extra allowance for his equipage. Two other events made this year memorable. Lotte — Werther's Lotte — now a widow in her sixtieth year, and mother of twelve children, pays him a visit at Weimar. They had not met since her marriage, and what a meeting this must have been for both! how strange a mingling of feelings recurrent to a pleasantly agitated past, and of feelings perplexed by the surprise at finding each other so much changed!

The second and far more serious event of the year

is the death of his wife. Many affected to consider this "a happy release." People are fond of arranging the lives of others according to their own conceptions, interpreting afflictions like these without regard to the feelings of the afflicted. The blow was heavy to bear. She who for eight and twenty years had loved and aided him, who — whatever her faults — had been to him what no other woman was, could not be taken from him without making him deeply feel the loss. His self-mastery was utterly shaken. He kneeled at her bedside, seizing her cold hands, and exclaiming: "Thou wilt not forsake me! No, no; thou must not forsake me!" He has expressed his feelings in two passages only; in the exquisite lines he wrote on the day of her death, and in a letter to Zelter. These are the lines:

> "Du versuchst, O Sonne, vergebens
> Durch die düstern Wolken zu scheinen!
> Der ganze Gewinn meines Lebens
> Ist, ihren Verlust zu beweinen."[1]

And to Zelter the words were these: "When I tell thee, thou rough and sorely tried son of earth, that my dear little wife has left me, thou wilt know what that means."

In Science he strove to find forgetfulness; and the loneliness of his house was next year changed into an unaccustomed liveliness by the marriage of his son with Ottilie von Pogwisch, one of the gayest and most brilliant of the Weimar circle. She was always a great favourite with her father-in-law, and during the remainder of his life not only kept his house for him, and received his numerous guests, but became a privileged favourite, to whom everything was permitted.

[1] "In vain, O Sun, you struggle to shine through the dark clouds; the whole gain of my life is to bewail her loss."

In the year following he sang a cradle song over his first grandchild.

His ministerial duties were not heavy, but were punctiliously performed. Here are two anecdotes which exhibit his imperious and determined character in a strong light. He had long laboured for the improvement of Jena. The library, he told Eckermann, "was in very bad condition. The situation was damp and close, and by no means fit to contain its treasures in a proper manner; particularly as, by purchase of the Büttner library on the part of the grand duke, an addition had been made of thirteen thousand volumes, which lay in heaps upon the floor, because there was no room to place them properly. I was really in some distress on that account. An addition should have been made to the building, but for this the means were wanting; and moreover this addition could easily be avoided, since adjoining the library there was a large room standing empty, and quite calculated to supply our necessities. However, this room was not in possession of the library, but was used by the medical faculty, who sometimes employed it for their conferences. I therefore applied to these gentlemen with the very civil request that they would give up this room for the library. To this they would not agree. They were willing, they said, to give it up if I would have a new room built for their conferences, and that immediately. I replied that I should be very ready to have another place prepared for them, but that I could not promise them a new building immediately. This did not satisfy them, for when next morning I asked them for the key, I was told it could not be found! There now remained no other course but to enter as conqueror. I therefore sent for a bricklayer, and took him into the library before the wall of the adjoining room. 'This wall, my friend,' said I, 'must be very thick, for it separates two different

parts of the building: just try how strong it is.' The bricklayer went to work, and scarcely had he given five or six hearty blows, when bricks and mortar fell in, and one could see through the opening some venerable perukes with which the room was decorated. 'Go on, my friend,' said I, 'I cannot yet see clearly enough. Do not restrain yourself, but act as if you were in your own house.' This friendly encouragement so animated the bricklayer, that the opening was soon large enough to serve perfectly for a door; when my library attendants rushed into the room each with an armful of books, which they threw upon the ground as a sign of possession. Benches, chairs, and desks vanished in a moment; and my assistants were so quick and active, that in a few days all the books were arranged along the walls. The doctors, who soon after entered the room through the usual door, were quite confounded at so unexpected a change. They did not know what to say, but retired in silence; but they all harboured a secret grudge against me. When I related this to the grand duke, he laughed heartily and quite approved me. Afterward, when, on account of the great dampness of the library, I wished to take down and remove the whole of the old city wall, which was quite useless, I found no better success. My entreaties, reasons, and representations found no hearing; and I was forced at last to go to work as a conqueror. When the city authorities saw my workmen destroying their old wall, they sent a deputation to the grand duke, with the humble request that his Highness would be pleased, by a word of command, to check my violent destruction of their venerable wall. But the grand duke, who had secretly authorised me, said: 'I do not intermeddle with Goethe's affairs. He knows what he has to do, and must act as he thinks right. Go to him and speak to him yourself if you have the courage!'"

The other anecdote is recorded by Luden. In 1823 the *Landtag* (or Parliament, to use the nearest English equivalent) assembled, and demanded the finance accounts. Goethe, who was at the head of the Commission for Art and Science, to which a sum of 11,787 thalers was allotted, at first took no notice of the demand made for his accounts; but was heard to express himself angrily at this Landtag, with its pedantic fuss about a paltry sum. At length he was prevailed upon to send in his accounts. What was the surprise of the Landtag to read a few lines to this effect: "Received, so much; expended, so much; remains, so much. *Signed* Grossherzgl. Immediatcommission für Wissenschaft und Kunst, *Goethe!*" At this cavalier procedure some of the members burst out laughing; others were indignant, and proposed to refuse the grant for the following year; a proposition which was all the more acceptable because the Landtag had a great idea of economy, and but a small idea of the value of science and art. Luden strove to convince them this was an unwise procedure. He urged indeed the necessity of the Landtag being put in possession of all the details of expenditure, not that any doubt could arise respecting the judicious mode in which the expenditure had been made, but because in public affairs it was indispensable men should see as well as believe. Against him it was argued that the mere statement of every groschen received and expended was not sufficient; it was also necessary that the Landtag should be convinced that the expenditure had been solely for useful and desirable purposes, not permitting any favouritism or luxury to enjoy the benefit of public money.

Although the sittings of the Landtag were strictly private, one cannot be surprised at these debates having oozed out and formed the topic of gossip. Goethe was very indignant. He had been so long accustomed to an

imperial sway, before which every one gave way, that the idea of his actions being controlled and questioned by a Landtag was very irritating to him. Nor, although he was obviously in the wrong in this instance, were the grand duke and duchess inclined to side against him. Karl August himself spoke earnestly to the land marshal, urging on him the impropriety of so offending Goethe; the grand duchess sent for Luden, who thus reports the interview: "She spoke to me with that dignified simplicity which made her so imposing, and which was imposing even to Napoleon in his anger. It would be a serious evil, she said, if our friendly relations should be disturbed by any misunderstanding. It would be the more unpleasant to me, because I fear it would much annoy the grand duke. The Landtag is unquestionably in the right; but the Geheimrath Goethe undoubtedly thinks he too is in the right. Above or beyond the written laws there is still another law — the *law for poets and women*. The Landtag is assuredly convinced that the whole of the money granted has been truly employed by Goethe? You admit that? Well, then, the only question that now can arise is whether the money had been properly expended. But here one must remember the position held by the Geheimrath in relation to the world, to this country, to our court, and to the grand duke through a long series of years: this position very naturally has influenced his mode of looking at affairs. I find it perfectly intelligible that he can well believe he has before all others the right of deciding for himself what is the best means of employing the money placed at his disposal. I do not understand these matters, and far be it from me to pretend to set any one right; my only wish is that friendly relations be preserved, and that the old Geheimrath may be spared every annoyance. How this is to be done I do not see. But the Landtag need be under no uneasiness lest

this should become a precedent. *We have but one Goethe, and who knows how long we may preserve him;* a second will not perhaps be soon found again."

Is this not very charming? And can we wonder that Luden was conquered, and that in turn the whole Landtag was brought over to a sort of sullen acquiescence? While relating such characteristic anecdotes, place must be found for another, which is indeed less interesting in itself, but which circulates in Germany and England under a very absurd and very injurious form. The first time I heard it gravely stated as a fact, of which proof could be brought, the reader may imagine with what indignation I at once denied it, and insisted on the proof being produced, although proof must have been indeed overwhelming which could make me believe that Goethe had *stolen an ingot of gold.* No proof, however, came. The accusation slipped from my mind, until it was once more gravely adduced, and that too in Weimar. The requisite inquiries having been made, this story emerged as the foundation of the scandal.

The Emperor of Russia had forwarded to Döbereiner, the great chemist, a bar of platinum. It was given to Goethe, who was to examine it, and make any experiment on it he pleased, and then transmit it to Döbereiner. Goethe, whose passion for minerals is well known, and who had the "collector's mania," placed this bar of platinum among his treasures, and delighted himself with contemplating it, till at last he could not be brought to part with it. Döbereiner, impatient, wrote to him, begging to have it sent. But no answer came. He wrote again, without success. He was, indeed, placed in a position very similar to that in which we saw Professor Büttner, who having lent Goethe his prisms and optical instruments, wrote in vain to have them returned, and was forced to send

his servant with an order to bring them away. Goethe delayed and delayed, and could not bring himself to part with the platinum; and when Döbereiner, out of patience, complained to the grand duke, Karl August laughed and said, "Leave the old donkey in peace! you'll never get it from him. I will write to the emperor for another."

To this may be added, that in the early *genialische* period Goethe carried off a hundred engravings by Albrecht Dürer from Knebel's collection, to study them at leisure at home, and these engravings Knebel never saw in his own house again. Now these cases, although coming under the catagory of that much abused license which men permit themselves, namely, the license of borrowing books, umbrellas, and money, are not defensible, nor will I palliate them. Let the reader pass any sentence he will upon such infractions of the rule of conscientiousness; but let us not hear such things uttered as that Goethe stole a bar of gold or platinum.

With Döbereiner, he followed all the new phenomena which chemistry was then bringing before the astonished world. He also prepared his own writings on Morphology for the press; and studied Greek mythology, English literature, and Gothic art. Byron's "Manfred" he reviewed in the *Kunst und Altherthum*, and enthusiastically welcomed our great poet as the greatest product of modern times. Scott also he read with ever-increasing admiration. Homer, always studied with delight, now reassumed to him that individuality which Wolff had for a time destroyed; Schubarth's "Ideen über Homer" having brought him round once more to the belief in the existence of "the blind old man of Scio's rocky isle."[1] Painting, sculpture, architecture, geology, meteorology, anatomy, optics, Oriental literature, English literature, Calderon, and the

[1] See the little poem "Homer wider Homer."

romantic school in France — these were the subjects which by turns occupied his inexhaustible activity. "Life," he says, "resembles the Sibylline Books; it becomes dearer the less there remains of it." To one who could so worthily occupy the last remaining years of a long life, they must indeed have been precious. As he grew older he worked harder. He went less into society. To court he very seldom went. "I wouldn't send the picture," writes the duke to him, "because I hoped it might lure thee out, now Candlemas is over, a day when every bear and badger leaves his lair." But in lieu of his going to court, the court went to him. Once every week the grand duchess paid him a visit, sometimes bringing with her a princely visitor, such as the late Emperor of Russia, then grand duke, or the King of Würtemberg. He had always something new and interesting set aside for this visit, which was doubly dear to him, because he had a tender regard for the grand duchess, and it pleased him to be able to show her a new engraving, medallion, book, poem, or some scientific novelty. Karl August came often, but not on particular days. He used to walk up into the simple study, and chat there as with a brother. One day Goethe had a Jena student paying him a visit; the student saw an elderly gentleman walk unannounced into the room, and quietly seat himself on a chair; the student continued his harangue, and when it was concluded, Goethe quietly said, "But I must introduce the gentlemen: his Royal Highness the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Herr ———, student from Jena." Never did the student forget the embarrassment of that moment!

The first edition of "Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre" falls in this period, 1821, and as this edition is the one best known in England through Carlyle's translation, it may now be criticised, the more so, as what was afterward *thrown into* the book (I will not say

"These were the subjects which occupied his activity"

Photogravure from the drawing by W. Friedrich

worked into it) only made it still more fragmentary and imperfect.

There are pages in the "Wanderjahre" which he alone could have written; but I cannot bring myself to regard the whole book as anything better than a collection of sketches and studies, often incomplete, and sometimes not worth completing. It is very unequal, some parts being as feeble as others are admirable. The story of "The Man of Fifty" has capital points, and the "New Melusina" is a charming fairy tale; but much of what is symbolical seems to me only fantastic; and as a composition the work is feeble, and careless even to impertinence. Not only are the various little stories "dragged in" with the transparent artifice of juvenile productions; not only are these stories for the most part tiresome and sometimes trivial, but there is one story ("Nicht zu weit") which, beginning with considerable animation, is actually left unfinished in the work, just as it lay unfinished in his portfolio. Observe it is not given as a fragment — the conclusion is promised, but never comes. This is an impertinence to the public; all the more remarkable as coming from a writer who thought so much of Art. He might have published the stories separately, as they were written separately; and if he could not work out the great scheme of the "Wanderjahre," he might have left it a fragment, or left it unpublished.

It is easy for admirers of this work to cite very beautiful passages; and it is by no means difficult to read under its symbolical dulness any profound meanings the interpreter wishes to read there. But for my own part, greatly as I admire Goethe, and profoundly as his works affect me, I do not recognise in the "Wanderjahre" the old magic, nor can my love for the writer persuade me that it is well written, well conceived, or intelligibly executed. I quarrel with no

man who finds delight in the book; but candour compels me to own that I find in it almost every fault a work can have: it is unintelligible, it is tiresome, it is fragmentary, it is dull, and it is often ill-written. When particular passages are cited for their wisdom or their beauty, one is apt to fancy that one has been unjust to a strange work; but a *re*-reading of the work as a whole soon restores the original verdict. Irving said that there was more true religion in the episode of the Three Reverences than in all the theological writings of the day. And Carlyle has on more than one occasion noticed the profound wisdom which shines through many of the pages. How can it be otherwise, when Goethe is the author? But separate passages do not make a book; and to show how this book was made, a passage from Eckermann will suffice. "When he began to remodel and finish this novel, which had previously appeared in one volume,[1] Goethe intended to expand it into two. But as the work progressed the manuscript grew beyond expectation; and as his secretary wrote widely, Goethe was deceived, and thought he had enough for three volumes, and accordingly the manuscript went in three volumes to the publishers. However, when the printing had reached a certain point, it was found that a miscalculation had been made, and that the two last volumes were too small. The publisher sent for more manuscript, and as the course of the novel could not be altered, and it was impossible to write a new tale in the hurry of the moment, Goethe was really in some perplexity. Under these circumstances he sent for me, told me the state of the case, and mentioned how he thought of helping himself out of the difficulty, laying before me two large bundles of manuscripts. 'In these two parcels,' said he, 'you will find various

[1] This is the volume Carlyle translated. See "German Romance," vol. iv. It is superior to the expanded work.

papers hitherto unpublished, detached pieces finished and unfinished; opinions on natural science, art, literature, and life, all mingled together. Suppose you were to make up from these six or eight printed sheets to fill the gaps in my "Wanderjahre." Strictly speaking they have nothing to do with it, but the proceeding may be justified by the fact that mention is made of an archive in Makaria's house in which such detached pieces are preserved. Thus we shall not only get over a difficulty, but find a fitting vehicle for sending a number of interesting things into the world.' I approved of the plan, set to work at once, and completed the desired arrangement in a short time. Goethe seemed well satisfied. I had put together the whole into two principal parts; one under the title 'From Makaria's Archive,' the other under the title 'According to the Views of the Wanderer.' And as Goethe, at this time, had just finished two poems — one on 'Schiller's Skull,' and the other 'Kein Wesen kann zu Nichts zerfallen' — he was desirous to bring out these also, and we added them at the close of the two divisions. But when the 'Wanderjahre' came out, no one knew what to make of it. The progress of the romance was interrupted by a number of enigmatical sayings, the explanation of which could be expected from men only of special studies, such as artists, literati, men of science; this greatly annoyed all other readers, especially those of the fair sex. Then, as for the two poems, people could as little understand them as they could guess how they got into such a place. Goethe laughed at this."

No other criticism of the "Wanderjahre" is needed after such a story. Had Goethe stood in awe of the public, had he lived in England or France, where "Reviewers" exercise at least the duty of Police, he would not thus have ventured to play with his own reputation and to mystify the public.

Nor did he escape without punishment even in Germany. He had mystified the public, but the public was not pleased. His friends were not pleased. No one accepted the work with satisfaction. It remained for writers of our day to see in it a social Bible — a Sibylline Book. The first symptoms of dissatisfaction came from his nearest friends; but their objections were of course mild, and were praise compared with the objections raised by his enemies. A certain Pustkuchen, a clergyman of Lieme, imitated Nicolai's parody of "Werther," but in a serious spirit, bringing out a "Wanderjahre," in which Goethe's views of life were held up to the execration of all good Christians. It had become the watchword of one party to say Goethe was no Christian; as it afterward became the watchword of another party to say he was no patriot; and, finally, there came Menzel, who said he was not only no Christian, no Patriot, no Moralist, but also no Genius, — only a man of talent! Goethe contented himself with an epigram or so on Pustkuchen, and continued his way. To his opponents generally he said, "If they could judge me, I should not be the man I am."

> "Hätten sie mich beurtheilen können
> So war' ich nicht was ich bin."

And the barking of the curs, he said, which follows us as we leave the stable, proves nothing more than that we are on horseback:

> "Es bellt der Spitz aus unserm Stall
> Und will uns stets begleiten.
> Und seiner lauten Stimme Schall
> Beweist nur dass wir reiten."

While a strong feeling of opposition was growing up in his own nation, a feeling which such works as the "Wanderjahre" were not likely to mitigate, his fame

began to extend to Italy, England, and France. His active interest in the important productions of foreign literature was reciprocated in the admiration expressed for him by men like Manzoni, Scott, Byron, Carlyle, Stapfer, Ampère, Soret, and others. He had written of Manzoni's "Carmagnola," defending it against adverse criticism, with a fervour which, according to Manzoni, secured his reputation in Europe. "It is certain that I owe to Goethe's admiration all the praise I have received. I was very ill treated until he so nobly defended me, and since then I have not only seen public opinion change, but I myself have learned to look at my productions in a new light." How profound was his admiration for Byron, and how flattered Byron was by it, is well known. The poem he sent to Byron, in answer to the dedication of "Werner," reached him just as he was setting out on the expedition to Greece.

Nor was this activity confined to reading. Oersted's magnificent discovery of electro-magnetism awakened his keenest interest. He made Döbereiner exhibit the phenomena, and shortly afterward had Oersted to visit him. D'Alton's anatomical work on the Sloth and Megatherium found him as ready as a young reviewer to proclaim its importance to the world. He wrote also the account of his "Campaign in France;" the "Annals" of his Life; Essays on Art; smaller poems; the epigrams, "Zahme Xenien;" translated modern Greek songs; and sketched a restoration of the lost drama "Phaëton" by Euripides.

It is evident then that there was abundant life in the old Jupiter, whose frame was still massive and erect; whose brow had scarcely a wrinkle of old age; whose head was still as free from baldness as ever; and whose large brown eyes had still that flashing splendour which distinguished them. Hufeland, the physician, who had made a special study of the human

organisation with reference to its powers of vitality, says, that never did he meet with a man in whom bodily and mental organisation were so perfect as in Goethe. Not only was the prodigious strength of vitality remarkable in him, but equally so the perfect *balance* of functions. "One can truly say that his distinguishing characteristic was the harmony with which all mental faculties worked together, so that his creative Imagination was always under the control of his Reason; and the same is true of his physical faculties: no function was predominant, all worked together for the continuance of a marvellous balance. But *productivity* was the fundamental character of his bodily and mental organisation; and the former showed itself in a rich nutritive power, a rapid sanguinification and reproduction. He made much blood even as an old man."

Not only life, but the life of life, the power of loving, was still preserved to him. *Quisquis amat, nulla est conditione senex*, says old Pontanus; and the Marquis de Lassay prettily makes the loss of love-dreams a sign of the last sleep: "Hélas, quand on commence à ne plus rêver, ou plutôt à rêver moins, on est près de s'endormir pour toujours." In the seventy-fourth year of his age, Goethe had still youth enough to love. At Marienbad he met with a Fräulein von Lewezow. A passion grew up between them, which, returned on her side with almost equal vehemence, brought back to him once more the exaltation of the "Werther" period. It was thought he would marry her, and indeed he wished to do so; but the representations of his friends, and perhaps the fear of ridicule, withheld him. He tore himself away; and the Marienbad Elegy, which he wrote in the carriage as it whirled him away, remains as a token of the passion and his suffering.

Nor does the Fräulein von Lewezow appear to have been the only one captivated by the "old man elo-

quent." Madame Szymanowska, according to Zelter, was "madly in love" with him; and however figurative such a phrase may be, it indicates, coming from so grave a man as Zelter, a warmth of enthusiasm one does not expect to see excited by a man of seventy-four.

Although then seventy-three, he seemed only fifty to Felix Mendelssohn when that bright and fascinating boy came on a visit to Weimar, and charmed them all with his loving nature no less than with his musical genius. To Goethe he was as a David soothing the troubled mind of Saul. He would play to the old man for hours, "first begging a kiss, or taking one," and then springing from the music-stool he would chase the women through the rooms like a madcap. Goethe was deeply impressed by the music, but also felt his heart warm toward the clear and radiant nature of the boy. Nor is there any more charming glimpse of the poet's home than is given in the brief record of this episode.[1]

On the 7th of November, 1825, Goethe, who had a few weeks before prepared a Jubilee for the fiftieth anniversary of Karl August's reign, was in turn honoured by a Jubilee celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his arrival at Weimar. "At dawn of day, when he opened the shutters of his bedroom, the first sound that met his ears was a morning song, sung by voices concealed in his garden. His first glance fell on the various tasteful gifts of neat-handed friends. At half-past eight all the carriages in the town were in motion; all persons of consideration in court and city were in pilgrimage to the poet's house. A party of musicians, and fourteen female friends, had assembled in his salon, to perform a morning ode written by Professor Riemer, and set to music by Eberwein. At nine, when Goethe was conducted from his study by a friend and his own

[1] "Goethe und Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy." Von Dr. Karl Mendelssohn Bartholdy. Leipsic: 1871.

son, the crowd in every room was so great that they were obliged to lead him unobserved by a side entrance. Scarcely was that honoured head beheld than the music began, and heightened the emotion which beamed from all eyes. The nymphs of the Ilm greeted the golden day of their faithful poet, and sang his immortality. The whole throng of auditors was deeply affected. The tones melted away in solemn silence. With modest dignity, the venerable man turned to his friends and expressed his thanks by eloquent pressure of the hands and affectionate words. Baron von Fritsch then stepped forward, and delivered the autograph letter of the duke, and the golden medal which had been secretly struck in Berlin; it bore the likeness of Karl August and Luise on one side; on the other the laurel-crowned head of the poet; the names of Karl August and Luise were engraved on the rim.

"Goethe, who expected some memorial worthy of the giver, held both for some time unopened in silent emotion. The various deputations now advanced. There were deputations from Jena, Weimar, Eisenach, and from the Lodge of Freemasons. The Jena students addressed him through two deputies.

"Shortly after ten, Karl August and Luise came to offer their congratulations. They remained with him an hour alone: when the hereditary grand duke and grand duchess, with their two princesses, arrived. Meanwhile the ministers of state, the chiefs of the courts of justice, the most distinguished persons of the court, and the deputations had collected together; the principal ladies of Weimar, among whom were the daughters and granddaughters of Wieland and Herder, assembled in an upper room. As soon as all the invited had arrived, they were conducted, two by two, into the great room in which were placed the statue of the grand duke and Rauch's bust of Goethe, on a handsome pedestal, with a laurel crown beside it.

Just as the music reached the centre of the hall, music was heard from the galleries. The effect of this harmony in the lofty and beautiful hall, decorated with the busts and portraits, was indescribable.

"At two o'clock a banquet was prepared for more than two hundred persons in the hall of the Stadthaus. In the evening 'Iphigenia' was performed at the theatre. At the end of the third act, Goethe, warned by his physician, retired; and now a beautiful conclusion to this extraordinary day awaited him. A serenade was performed in front of his house by the orchestral band of the Grand Ducal Chapel. Hummel had with great feeling and taste combined the triumphal March in 'Titus,' Gluck's overture to 'Iphigenia,' and a masterly Adagio of his own, with an echo for horns. The opening expressed the triumphant glories of the day, while the melting tones of the Adagio seemed to invite to the tranquillity which follows the accomplishment of work.

"All the houses in the *Frauenplan*, where Goethe lived, were illuminated. A numerous company repaired to his house, where an elegant entertainment awaited them, and Goethe remained one hour with his guests before retiring for the night. This day was likewise celebrated at Leipsic and Frankfort. In Frankfort the consul-general Bethmann marked the day by placing in his museum a statue of Goethe, as large as life, which Rauch had executed for him."[1]

Reading this, and such anecdotes as the one formerly narrated about the Landtag, how can we wonder if the man, who was treated so like a god, adopted something of the imperiousness and assumption of the part thus thrust upon him?

[1] These details and many others are given in "Goethe's Goldener Jubeltag." Weimar: 1826. I have abridged the abridgment given by Mrs. Austin, "Goethe and His Contemporaries," vol. iii.

In the following year Germany showed her gratitude to him by a privilege which in itself is the severest sarcasm on German nationality — the privilege, namely, of a protection of his copyright. He announced a complete edition of his works, and the *Bundestag* undertook to secure him from piracy in German cities! Until that time his works had enriched booksellers; but this tardy privilege secured an inheritance for his children.

In the way of honours, he was greatly flattered by the letter which Walter Scott sent to him, in expression of an old admiration; and on the 28th of August, 1827, Karl August came into his study accompanied by the King of Bavaria, who brought with him the Order of the Grand Cross as a homage. In strict etiquette a subject was not allowed to accept such an Order without his own sovereign granting permission, and Goethe, ever punctilious, turned to the grand duke, saying: "If my gracious sovereign permits." Upon which the duke called out: "*Du alter Kerl! mache doch kein dummes Zeug!* Come, old fellow, no nonsense."

On the 6th of January, 1827, the Frau von Stein died, in her eighty-fifth year.

And now the good old duke was to be taken from him whom he affectionately styled his *Waffenbruder* — his brother in arms. On the 14th of June, 1828, he was no more. Humboldt's letter to Goethe contains so interesting an account of the duke's last hours, that some sentences may here be cited: "As if this great brightness, as with the lofty snow-capped Alps, were the forerunner of departing light, never have I seen the great humane prince more animated, more intelligent, more mild, more sympathising with the further development of the people than in the last days when we had him here. I frequently said to my friends, anxiously and full of misgivings, that this animation, this mysterious clearness of intellect, combined with so much bodily weakness, was to me a fearful phenom-

enon. He himself evidently vacillated between hope of recovery and expectation of the great catastrophe. In Potsdam I sat many hours with him. He drank and slept alternately, then drank again, then rose to write to his consort, and then slept again. He was cheerful, but much exhausted. In the intervals he overpowered me with the most difficult questions upon physics, astronomy, meteorology, and geology; upon the atmosphere of the moon; upon the coloured double stars; upon the influence of the spots in the sun upon the temperature; upon the appearance of organised forms in the primitive world; and upon the internal warmth of the earth. He slept at intervals during his discourse and mine, was often restless, and then said, kindly excusing his apparent inattention, 'You see, Humboldt, it is all over with me!' Suddenly he began to talk desultorily upon religious matters. He regretted the increase of pietism, and the connection of this species of fanaticism with a tendency toward political absolutism, and the suppression of all free mental action. 'Then,' he exclaimed, 'there are false-hearted fellows, who think that by means of pietism they can make themselves agreeable to princes, and obtain places and ribbons. They have smuggled themselves in with a poetical predilection for the middle ages.' His anger soon abated, and he said that he had found much consolation in the Christian religion. 'It is a humane doctrine,' said he, 'but has been distorted from the beginning. The first Christians were the free thinkers among the ultras.'"

Knowing Goethe's love for the duke, his friends entertained great fears that the shock of this event would be terrible. He was seated at dinner when the news arrived. It was whispered from one to the other. At length it was gently broken to him. They were breathless with suspense. But his face remained quite calm — a calmness which betrayed him. "Ah! this is

very sad," he sighed; "let us change the subject." He might banish the subject from conversation, he could not banish it from his thoughts. It affected him deeply; all the more so, because he did not give expression to his grief. "*Nun ist alles vorbei!* Nothing now remains," he said. When Eckermann came in the evening he found him utterly prostrate.[1]

Retiring to the pleasant scenes of Dornburg, the old man strove in work and in the contemplation of nature to call away his thoughts from his painful loss. The next year — 1829 — he finished the "Wanderjahre," in the form it now assumes, worked at the Second Part of "Faust," and in conjunction with a young Frenchman, Soret, who was occupied translating the "Metamorphoses of Plants," revised his scientific papers.

In February, 1830, the death of the grand duchess once more overshadowed the evening of his life. These clouds gathering so fast are significant warnings of the Night which hurries on for him — "the night in which no man can work!"

Before narrating the last days of this long career, it will be necessary to say something of the Second Part of "Faust," which was not indeed finally completed until the 20th July, 1831, but which may be noticed here to avoid interruption of the closing scene.

[1] The calmness with which he received the announcement recalls those grand scenes in Marston's "Malcontent" and Ford's "Broken Heart," where the subordination of emotion to the continuance of offices of politeness rises into sublimity. Herodotus has touched the same chord in his narrative of the terrific story of Astyages ("Clio," 119). Harpagus, on discovering that he has feasted on his own children in the banquet set before him by Astyages, remains quite calm. Shakespeare has expressed the true philosophy of the matter in his usual pregnant language:

> "Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
> Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECOND PART OF "FAUST."

In the presence of this poem, I feel more embarrassment than with any other of Goethe's works. Difficult as the task has been in each instance to convey an adequate idea of the work before me, and to give expression to the opinion formed respecting it, that difficulty becomes complicated in the present instance by the consciousness of the opposition existing between a certain class of admirers and myself, a class not of ignorant, prejudiced, but of enlightened and ingenious intellects. These admirers speak of the Second Part of "Faust" as a work of transcendent merit, surpassing all that Goethe has written, a storehouse of profound and mystic philosophy, a miracle of execution. Others again, and these among Goethe's most loving students, declare it to be of mediocre interest, very far inferior to the First Part, and both in conception and execution an elaborate mistake. And of these I am one. I have tried to understand the work; tried to place myself at the right point of view for perfect enjoyment; but repeated trials, instead of clearing up obscurities and deepening enjoyment, as with the other works, have more and more confirmed my first impressions. Now although it needs but little experience to suggest that the fault may be wholly mine, "the most legible hand," as Goethe says, "being illegible in the twilight;" although I might learn from what I have felt, and from what others have felt about the First Part, not to be

hasty in pronouncing judgment, nevertheless I must express my real convictions, and not withhold them on the chance that future enlightenment may cause me to alter them. What Channing says of opinions generally, is applicable to critical opinions: we are answerable for their *uprightness*, not for their *rightness*.

Moreover, comparing the impressions produced by "Faust" and by the Second Part, although it is true that in both cases a sense of disappointment is created, the kind of objection made to each is entirely different. In "Faust," a want of familiarity with the work may cause it to appear fragmentary, discordant, irreverent, not sufficiently metaphysical, and so forth; but a single reading is enough to impress us with a sense of its interest, its pathos, its poetry, its strongly marked character. In other words, the substance of the work lays hold of us; it is only the execution upon which criticism exercises itself. If we think it fragmentary, the fragments are at any rate of deep significance. If we think it deficient in taste, we never reproach it with want of power. The reverse is the case with this Second Part. Our objections are not raised by the details, but by the body of the poem; it is not the execution, but the whole conception, both in respect to the story itself, and to the mode of working out that story. What is the consequence? The consequence is that familiarity with "Faust" removes our objections and intensifies our admiration; but familiarity with the Second Part confirms our objections, and discloses their source.

If we remember that all Goethe's works are biographical, are parts of his life, and expressions of the various experiences he underwent, and the various stages of culture he passed through, there will be a peculiar interest in examining this product of his old age; and at the same time the reader will see the motive which made me reserve for this chapter what

has to be said on the Second Part, instead of affixing it to the criticism of the First Part; for indeed the two poems are two, not two parts of one poem; the interval between them in conception and treatment is as wide as the interval of years between their composition. Taking up the biographical clue, we have seen in previous chapters the gradual development of a tendency toward mysticism and over-reflectiveness, which, visible as a germ in his earliest years, grew with his growth, and expanded in the later years, till its overgrowth shadowed and perplexed his more vigorous concrete tendencies, and made this clearest and most spontaneous of poets as fond of symbols as if he had been a priest of Isis. To those — and they are many — who think the aim and purpose of Art is to create symbols for Philosophy, this development will be prized as true progress. Others who do not thus subordinate the artist to the thinker, must regard the encroachment of Reflection as a sign of decay. It is quite true that Modern Art, as representative of the complexity of Modern Life, demands a large admixture of Reflection; but the predominance of the reflective tendency is a sign of decay. It is true that for an organism of a certain degree of complexity, an internal osseous structure is necessary; but the increase of ossification is cause and consequence of decay of vital power.

With the two parts of "Faust" we have very much the same critical questions to debate as with the earlier and later books of "Wilhelm Meister;" questions too wide and deep for thorough discussion here, and which I must content myself with indicating. One cardinal consideration must, however, be brought forward, which lies at the very basis of all arguments on the subject. It is this: If the artist desires to express certain philosophic conceptions by means of symbols, he must never forget that, Art being Representation, the symbols chosen must possess *in themselves* a charm inde-

pendent of what they mean. The forms which are his materials, the symbols which are his language, must in themselves have a beauty, and an interest, readily appreciable by those who do not understand the occult meaning. Unless they have this they cease to be Art; they become hieroglyphs. Art is picture-painting, not picture-writing. Beethoven in his Symphonies, may have expressed grand psychological conceptions, which, for the mind that interprets them, may give them an extra charm; but if the strains in themselves do not possess a magic, if they did not sting the soul with a keen delight, then let the meaning be never so profound, it will pass unheeded, because the *primary requisite* of music is not that it shall present grand thoughts, but that it shall agitate the audience with musical emotions. The poet who has only profound meanings, and not the witchery which is to carry his expression of those meanings home to our hearts, has failed. The primary requisite of poetry is that it shall move us; not that it shall instruct us.

The Second Part of "Faust," if the foregoing be correct, is a failure, because it fails in the primary requisite of a poem. Whatever else it might be, no one will say it is moving. The scenes, incidents, and characters do not *in themselves* carry that overpowering charm which masters us in the First Part. They borrow their interest from the meanings they are supposed to symbolise. Only in proportion to your ingenuity in guessing the riddle is your interest excited by the means. Mephisto, formerly so marvellous a creation, has become a mere mouthpiece; Faust has lost all traces of humanity, every pulse of emotion. The philosophic critics will point out how this change is necessary, because in the Second Part all that was individual has become universal. But this is only a description, not a justification; it is dignifying failure with a philosophic purpose. Goethe has himself declared this to

have been his intention: "I could not help wondering," he says, "that none of those who undertook a continuation and completion of my fragment should have conceived the idea, which seemed so obvious, that the Second Part must necessarily be carried into a more elevated sphere, conducting Faust into higher regions under worthier circumstances." Right enough: but in changing the ground there was no necessity for such a change of treatment; to conduct Faust into a higher region it was not necessary to displace the struggles of an individual by representative abstractions; above all, it was not necessary to forsake the real domain of Art for that of Philosophy, and sacrifice beauty to meaning. The defect of this poem does not lie in its occult meanings, but in the poverty of the life which those meanings are meant to animate. No matter how occult the meaning, so that the picture be fine. A lion may be the symbol of wakefulness, of strength, of kingliness, of solitariness, and of many other things, according to the arbitrary fancy of the artist; and it matters comparatively little whether we rightly or wrongly interpret the artist's meaning; but his lion must be finely executed, must excite our admiration *as* a lion, if we are to consider it a work of Art.

Respecting the philosophic meaning of the First Part, critics battle, and will battle perhaps for ever; but they are tolerably unanimous respecting its beauty. The passion, poetry, sarcasm, fancy, wisdom, and thrilling thoughts as from some higher world; the pathos and naïveté of Gretchen; the cruel coldness of Mephisto; the anguish of the restless student; these are what all understand, and, understanding, enjoy. We may baffle ourselves with the mystery; we all are enchanted with the picture. We are moved by it as children are moved while reading the "Pilgrim's Progress," believing all its allegorical persons and incidents to be real. When the child grows older, and learns to

read beneath the allegory a series of grand representative abstractions, a new enjoyment is added; but even then the enjoyment depends less on the meaning than on the form. In all attempts at allegory which make the meaning prominent, and neglect the form, the effect is cold, lifeless, uninteresting. Allegory, which has been said to tell the story of a mind while seeming to tell the story of a life, is only acceptable on the condition of its story being interesting in itself. The Second Part of "Faust" fails in this first requisite. You must have the key to it. There is no direct appeal to the emotions. There is no intrinsic beauty in the symbols. In saying this I speak of it as a whole; there are many passages of exquisite beauty, some lines of profound thought, and some happy sarcasm; but there is no incident, no character, no one scene which lives in the memory like the incidents, characters, and scenes of the First Part.

The work opens with Faust on the flowery turf trying to calm his restlessness in sleep. It is twilight, and around him hover celestial spirits. Ariel sings, accompanied by an Æolian harp; the other spirits join in chorus, and Faust, awakened by the sunrise, pours forth his feelings in beautiful verse. This may represent the awakening from the dark Night of his soul which has followed on the death of Margaret, and which now vanishes as Time, the consoler, brings round the Day, and as the fresh morning air inspires fresh energies.

> "Du regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschliessen
> Zum höchsten Daseyn immerfort zu streben."

The scene changes to the Emperor's Court. Things are in a bad state. The Lord Chancellor complains that the laws are disregarded; the Generalissimo complains of the army; and the First Lord of the Treasury complains of the empty exchequer. This is a very

amusing scene, full of sarcasm and sly wisdom. Mephisto appears in the guise of a Court Fool, and the Emperor asks his advice. Gold, says Mephisto, is abundant in the earth, and can be brought to light by man's nature and spiritual power. No sooner are these words Nature and Spirit pronounced than the Lord Chancellor, with sensitive orthodoxy prescient of heresy, exclaims:

> "Natur und Geist — so spricht man nicht zu Christen.
> Desshalb verbrennt man Atheisten.

"Nature and Spirit — words not fit for Christian ears. It is for such words we burn Atheists." He adds, that there are but two classes who worthily support the throne: — the clergy and aristocracy: they withstand the storm, — and take Church and State in payment of their services. The fun of this scene would be more relished if it were visibly woven into the plot; but one fails to see any connecting link: the more so as Faust is not even present. The next scene is equally obscure. It is a masque got up for the Emperor, and is as wild and variegated as may be. It contains some light happy verses and some satire; but the reader is bewildered. The next scene is the Emperor's pleasure grounds: a satire on Law's scheme of paper money is introduced. Mephisto has declared man's mind will bring money to light; and this is proved by man resolving to attach the value of gold to paper. The people thus suddenly enriched with cheap wealth, run into the wildest extravagances. Fine material for the commentator here; but the reader is not greatly elated. In the next scene, Faust has drawn Mephistopheles apart, much to the devil's surprise, who asks him if there has not been amusement enough for him in the motley throng; but Faust has promised the Emperor to show him Helen of Troy, and calls upon Mephisto to fulfil that promise. Mephisto says he has no power

over the heathen world; and Helen is not so easily brought on the stage as paper money is. But there is nevertheless a way: Faust must seek The Mothers who dwell in terrible solitudes:

> "Ins Unbetretene
> Nicht zu Betretende."

Faust departs. The scene changes, and again presents the court. Mephisto there removes the freckles from a fair one's face, cures another of lameness, gives a philtre to a third. The lights begin to burn dimly in the hall, and the spectacle commences. Faust appears on the stage and calls up Paris, who is variously criticised by the company; then Helen appears, and Mephisto, who sees her for the first time, confesses she is beautiful, but not exactly to his taste. But Faust is in uncontrollable rapture and expresses what may be interpreted as the feelings of a German Artist brought into the presence of Grecian Art. He is jealous of Paris, and interferes. Then follows an explosion: the spirits disappear, and Faust is borne off senseless by Mephisto. Thus closes the first act.

If we disregard for a moment the symbolical significance of these scenes, and the occasional charm of the writing, there will be little to admire; and this consideration is all-important, because even if the symbolism be accepted by us, as it is by certain critics, if we marvel at the profound thought and searching sarcasm underlying the phantasmagoria, we are still only admiring the Philosopher, and have not the Artist before us; we are praising the poem for other than poetic qualities. Nor must we be surprised if readers, who do not perceive the meaning intended to be conveyed, or seeing it, do not highly esteem it, are lukewarm in their admiration.

In the second act Faust is discovered lying in bed in his old Study, Mephisto by his side. A servant comes

in, from whom we learn that Wagner has taken Faust's place, and acquired almost as great a reputation. He has long been busied in attempts to discover the vital principle, by means of which he will create a man. Our old friend the Student now enters: he whom Mephisto instructed years ago. He is an Idealist, and presents an occasion for some quizzing of Fichte's philosophy. We are then led into Wagner's laboratory. He has just completed his manufacture of an Homunculus, which he keeps in a bottle. There is very admirable writing in this scene; especially quaint and characteristic is the language of Wagner, who, in the pride of science, declares the old methods of generation to be idle and frivolous:

> "Wie sonst das Zeugen Mode war
> Erklären wir für eitel Possen."

It may be all very well for animals, but man with his high gifts must have a purer, higher origin.

The Homunculus, however, turns out to be an imp, and a very irreverent imp, who undertakes to instruct Mephisto, and conducts him and Faust into the Classical Walpurgis Night, which occupies the rest of the act. This Walpurgis Night, which is a classical pendant to the Brocken scene in the First Part, is a sort of olla podrida. It contains the gathered fragments of many years, thrown together without much care, and with infinite obscurity. It is an inexhaustible field for Commentators. A capital touch is that of making Mephisto feel quite a stranger among the classical figures, and very humourous his disapprobation of the Antique Nude!

> "Zwar sind auch wir von Herzen unanständig,
> *Doch das Antike find' ich zu lebendig!*"

In the Brocken scene of the First Part we had the German world of Witchcraft, and the German ideal of

female loveliness and simplicity in Gretchen. In this *Second Part* we have the Classical world of Supernaturalism, and the Greek ideal of loveliness in Helen. The third act is occupied with "Helena," which was originally published as a separate poem, and was reviewed at some length by Carlyle in the *Foreign Review.*[1] He says of it truly enough that "it by no means carries its significance written on its forehead, so that he who runs may read; but, on the contrary, it is enveloped in a certain mystery, under coy disguises, which to hasty readers may be not only offensively obscure, but altogether provoking and impenetrable." We should not quarrel with its obscurity, if the opaque forms themselves had transcendent beauty: an alabaster vase may give as much delight as a vase of crystal. Carlyle, indeed, is forced to add that the "outward meaning seems unsatisfactory enough, were it not that ever and anon we are reminded of a cunning, manifold meaning which lies hidden under it; and incited by capricious beckonings to evolve this more and more completely from its quaint concealment." The question at issue here rests entirely on the share to be allotted to Meaning in a work of Art. Carlyle refers to Bunyan as "nowise our best theologian; neither unhappily is theology our most attractive science: yet which of our compends and treatises, nay which of our romances and poems, lives in such mild sunshine as the good old 'Pilgrim's Progress' in the memory of so many men?" But this, if I have not altogether mistaken the point, is a condemnation; for who can say that the memories of men are fondly occupied with the Second Part of "Faust" in general, or with "Helena" in particular?

But while I am thus thrown into a position of antagonism both with respect to the work itself and to its eulogists, I must guard against the supposition

[1] Subsequently reprinted in his "Miscellanies," vol. i.

that I do not admire this "Helena." The style of Art is one which requires for perfect success qualities absent from the whole Second Part;" but no lover of poetry will fail to recognise the poetry and the charm here to a great degree thrown away. To those who love riddles, to those who love interpretations, the work is inexhaustible; to those who love beautiful verses, and glimpses of a deeply meditative mind, the work is, and always will be attractive; but those who open it expecting a masterpiece, will, I think, be perpetually disappointed. Some minds will be delighted with the allegorical Helen embracing Faust, and in the embrace leaving only her veil and vest behind, her body vanishing into thin air — typical of what must ever be the embrace of the defunct Classical with the living Romantic, the resuscitated Past with the actual Present — and in their delight at the recognition of the meaning, will write chapters of commentary. But the kiss of Gretchen is worth a thousand allegories.

The analysis need not be prolonged, the more so as nothing worthy of special notice occurs in the last two acts. Faust, who has viewed many of the aspects of life, is now grown jealous of the encroachments of the sea, and determines to shut it out. He is old, sad, reflective. Four gray old women — Want, Guilt, Misery, and Care — appear to him. On Care asking him if he has ever known her, he answers: "I have gone through the world, seized every enjoyment by the hair — that which did not satisfy me I let go, that which ran away from me I would not follow. I have only wished and realised my wish, and wished again, and thus have stormed through life: first great and mighty; but now I take things wisely and soberly. I know enough of this life, and of the world to come we have no clear prospect. A fool is he who directs his blinking eyes *that* way, and imagines creatures like

himself above the clouds! Let him stand firm and look around him here, the world is not dumb to the man of real sense. What need is there for him to sweep eternity? All he can know lies within his grasp." These concluding words contain Goethe's own philosophy, and I must quote the original:

> "Thor! wer dorthin die Augen blinzend richtet,
> Sich über Wolken seines Gleichen dichtet!
> Er stehe fest und sehe hier sich um;
> Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.
> Was braucht er in die Ewigkeit zu schweifen?
> Was er erkennt lässt sich ergreifen."

Faust refusing to recognise the omnipotence of Care, she breathes on him, and blinds him; but, blind though he be, he resolves that the work he has planned shall be concluded. "A marsh," he says, "extends along the mountain's foot, infecting all that is already won: to draw off the noisome pool would be a crowning success. I lay open a space for many millions to dwell upon, not safely it is true, but in free activity. . . . Yes, heart and soul am I devoted to this wish; this is the last resolve of wisdom. He only deserves freedom and life who is daily compelled to conquer them for himself; and thus here, hemmed round by danger, bring childhood, manhood, and old age their well-spent years to a close. I would fain see such a busy multitude stand upon free soil with free people. I might then say to the moment, 'Stay, thou art fair!' The trace of my earthly days cannot perish in centuries. In the presentiment of such exalted bliss I now enjoy the most exalted moment." He has thus said to the passing moment "Stay! thou art fair," and with this he expires.

> "Venit summa dies et ineluctabile fatum," —

the troubled career is closed. And as far as the problem of "Faust" can receive a solution more general

than the one indicated at the close of the criticism on the First Part, the solution is, I think, given in this dying speech; the toiling soul, after trying in various directions of *individual* effort and *individual* gratification, and finding therein no peace, is finally conducted to the recognition of the vital truth that man lives for man, and that only in as far as he is working for Humanity can his efforts bring permanent happiness.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CLOSING SCENES.

THE spring of 1830 found Goethe, in his eighty-first year, busy with "Faust," writing the preface to Carlyle's "Life of Schiller," and deeply interested in the great philosophical contest which was raging in Paris, between Cuvier and Geoffroy St. Hilaire, on the question of Unity of Composition in the Animal Kingdom. This question, one of the many important and profound questions which are now agitated in Biology, which lies indeed at the bottom of almost all speculations on Development, had for very many years been answered by Goethe in the spirit which he recognised in Geoffroy St. Hilaire; and it was to him a matter of keen delight to observe the world of science earnestly bent on a solution of the question. The anecdote which M. Soret narrates in the supplemental volume to Eckermann's conversations is very characteristic.

"Monday, 1st August, 1830. The news of the Revolution of July reached Weimar to-day, and set every one in commotion. I went in the course of the afternoon to Goethe. 'Now,' exclaimed he, as I entered, 'what do you think of this great event? The volcano has come to an eruption; everything is in flames.' 'A frightful story,' I answered; 'but what could be expected otherwise under such notoriously bad circumstances and with such a ministry, than that the whole would end in the expulsion of the royal family?' 'We do not appear to understand each other, my good

friend,' said Goethe; 'I am not speaking of those people, but of something quite different. I am speaking of the contest so important for science between Cuvier and Geoffroy St. Hilaire, which has come to an open rupture in the Academy.' This expression of Goethe's was so unexpected that I did not know what to say, and for some minutes was perfectly at a standstill. 'The matter is of the highest importance,' he continued; 'and you can form no conception of what I felt at the intelligence of the *séance* of the 19th July. We have now in Geoffroy a powerful and permanent ally. I see how great must be the interest of the French scientific world in this affair; because, notwithstanding the terrible political commotion, the *séance* of the 19th July was very fully attended. However, the best of it is that the synthetic manner of looking at Nature, introduced by Geoffroy into France, cannot be kept back any longer. From the present time Mind will rule over Matter in the scientific investigations of the French. There will be glances of the great maxims of creation — of the mysterious workshop of God! Besides, what is all intercourse with Nature, if we merely occupy ourselves with individual material parts, and do not feel the breath of the spirit which prescribes to every part its direction, and orders or sanctions every deviation by means of an inherent law! I have exerted myself in this great question for fifty years. At first I was alone, then I found support, and now at last, to my great joy, I am surpassed by congenial minds.' "

Instead of exclaiming against the coldness of the man, who at such a moment could turn from politics to science, let us glance at a somewhat parallel case. Englishmen will be slow in throwing stones at the immortal Harvey; let them hear what Doctor Ent reports. Soon after the most agitating event in English history — the execution of Charles I. — Doc-

tor Ent called on Harvey, and found him seeking solace in anatomical researches. "Did I not," said the great philosopher, "find a balm for my spirit in the memory of my observations of former years, I should feel little desire for life. But so it has been that this life of obscurity, this vacation from public business, which causes tedium and disgust to so many, has proved a sovereign remedy to me."

Goethe was not a politician, and he was a biologist. His view of the superior importance of such an event as the discussion between Geoffroy and Cuvier, to the more noisy but intrinsically less remarkable event, the Revolution of July, is a view which will be accepted by some philosophers, and rejected by all politicians. Goethe was not content with expressing in conversation his sense of the importance of this discussion; he also commenced the writing of his celebrated review of it, and finished the first part in September.

In November another great affliction smote him; it was the last he had to bear: the news arrived that his only son, who had a little while before gone to Italy in failing health, had died in Rome on the 28th of October. The sorrowing father strove, as usual, to master all expression of emotion, and to banish it by restless work. But vain was the effort to live down this climbing sorrow. The trial nearly cost him his life. A violent hæmorrhage in the lungs was the result. He was at one time given over; but he rallied again, and set once more to work, completing the Autobiography and continuing "Faust."

Ottilie von Goethe, the widow of his son, and his great favourite, devoted herself to cheer his solitude. She read Plutarch aloud to him; and this, with Niebuhr's Roman History, carried him amid the great pageantries of the past, where his antique spirit could wander as among friends. Nor was the present dis-

regarded. He read with the eagerness of youth whatever was produced by remarkable writers, such as Béranger, Victor Hugo, Delavigne, Scott, or Carlyle. He received the homage of Europe; his rooms were constantly brightened by the presence of illustrious visitors, among whom the English were always welcome.

Rambling over the wild moors, with thoughts oftentimes as wild and dreary as those moors, the young Carlyle, who had been cheered through his struggling sadness, and strengthened for the part he was to play in life, by the beauty and the wisdom which Goethe had revealed to him, suddenly conceived the idea that it would be a pleasant and a fitting thing if some of the few admirers in England forwarded to Weimar a trifling token of their admiration. On reaching home, Mrs. Carlyle at once sketched the design of a seal to be engraved: the serpent of eternity encircling a star, with the words *Ohne Hast, ohne Rast* (Unhasting, unresting), in allusion to the well-known verses:

> "Wie das Gestirn,
> Ohne Hast,
> Aber ohne Rast,
> Drehe sich jeder
> Um die eigne Last."

"Like a star, unhasting, unresting, be each one fulfilling his God-given hest." Fifteen English admirers subscribed to have a handsome seal made, on the golden belt of which was engraved: *To the German Master: from friends in England: 28th August, 1831.* This letter accompanied it:

"*To the Poet Goethe, on the 28th August, 1831.*

"SIR: — Among the friends whom this so interesting anniversary calls round you, may we English friends, in thought and symbolically, since personally it is impossible, present ourselves to offer you our

affectionate congratulations? We hope you will do us the honour to accept this little Birthday Gift, which, as a true testimony of our feelings, may not be without value.

"We said to ourselves: As it is always the highest duty, and pleasure, to show reverence where reverence is due, and our chief, perhaps our only benefactor, is he who by act and word instructs us in wisdom; so we, undersigned, feeling toward the Poet Goethe as the spiritually taught toward their spiritual teacher, are desirous to express that sentiment openly and in common; for which end we have determined to solicit his acceptance of a small English gift, proceeding from us all equally, on his approaching birthday; so that while the venerable man still dwells among us, some memorial of the gratitude we owe him, and we think the whole world owes him, may not be wanting.

"And thus our little tribute, perhaps among the purest that men could offer to man, now stands in visible shape, and begs to be received. May it be welcome, and speak permanently of a most close relation, though wide seas flow between the parties!

"We pray that many years may be added to a life so glorious, that all happiness may be yours, and strength given to accomplish your high task, even as it has hitherto proceeded, like a star, without haste yet without rest.

"We remain, Sir, your friends and servants,

"FIFTEEN ENGLISHMEN."[1]

The sentiment expressed in this letter, which every one will see comes from Carlyle, namely, the reverence

[1] The names of these Englishmen, as far as I have been able to ascertain, are Carlyle and his brother, Doctor Carlyle, Walter Scott, Lockhart, Wordsworth, Southey, Churchill, Frazer, Professor Wilson, Jerdan, Heraud, Lord Leveson Gower, and Proctor (Barry Cornwall).

felt for the spiritual teacher by the spiritually taught, is a manifestation that Goethe's teaching had already borne fruit, and that even in distant lands men discerned the quality in which his works are preëminent above those of any modern writer — the quality of deep and far-reaching insight.

The English tribute was extremely gratifying, because for England and Englishmen his admiration was very hearty. Among the English who lived at Weimer during those days was a youth whose name is now carried in triumph wherever English Literature is cherished — I allude to William Makepeace Thackeray; and Weimar Albums still display with pride the caricatures which the young satirist sketched at that period. He has kindly enabled me to enrich these pages with a brief account of his reminiscences, gracefully sketched in the following letter:

"LONDON, 28th April, 1855.

"DEAR LEWES: — I wish I had more to tell you regarding Weimar and Goethe. Five and twenty years ago, at least a score of young English lads used to live at Weimar for study, or sport, or society; all of which were to be had in the friendly little Saxon capital. The grand duke and duchess received us with the kindliest hospitality. The court was splendid, but yet most pleasant and homely. We were invited in our turns to dinners, balls, and assemblies there. Such young men as had a right, appeared in uniforms, diplomatic and military. Some, I remember, invented gorgeous clothing: the kind old Hof Marschall of those days, M. de Spiegel (who had two of the most lovely daughters eyes ever looked on), being in nowise difficult as to the admission of these young Englanders. Of the winter nights we used to charter sedan-chairs, in which we were carried through the snow to those pleasant court entertainments. I, for my part, had

the good luck to purchase Schiller's sword, which formed a part of my court costume, and still hangs in my study, and puts me in mind of days of youth the most kindly and delightful.

"We knew the whole society of the little city, and but that the young ladies, one and all, spoke admirable English, we surely might have learned the very best German. The society met constantly. The ladies of the court had their evenings. The theatre was open twice or thrice in the week, where we assembled, a large family party. Goethe had retired from the direction, but the great traditions remained still. The theatre was admirably conducted; and besides the excellent Weimar company, famous actors and singers from various parts of Germany performed 'Gastrollen'[1] through the winter. In that winter I remember we had Ludwig Devrient in Shylock, Hamlet, Falstaff, and the 'Robbers;' and the beautiful Schröder in 'Fidelio.'

"After three and twenty years' absence, I passed a couple of summer days in the well remembered place, and was fortunate enough to find some of the friends of my youth. Madame de Goethe was there and received me and my daughters with the kindness of old days. We drank tea in the open air at the famous cottage in the park,[2] which still belongs to the family, and has been so often inhabited by her illustrious father.

"In 1831, though he had retired from the world, Goethe would nevertheless very kindly receive strangers. His daughter-in-law's tea-table was always spread for us. We passed hours after hours there and night after night, with the pleasantest talk and music. We read over endless novels and poems in French, English, and German. My delight in those days was to make cari-

[1] What in England are called "starring engagements."
[2] The *Gartenhaus*.

catures for children. I was touched to find that they were remembered, and some even kept until the present time; and very proud to be told, as a lad, that the great Goethe had looked at some of them.

"He remained in his private apartments, where only a very few privileged persons were admitted; but he liked to know all that was happening, and interested himself about all strangers. Whenever a countenance struck his fancy, there was an artist settled in Weimar who made a portrait of it. Goethe had quite a gallery of heads, in black and white, taken by this painter. His house was all over pictures, drawings, casts, statues, and medals.

"Of course I remember very well the perturbation of spirit with which, as a lad of nineteen, I received the long-expected intimation that the Herr Geheimrath would see me on such a morning. This notable audience took place in a little antechamber of his private apartments, covered all round with antique casts and bas-reliefs. He was habited in a long gray or drab redingot, with a white neck-cloth and a red ribbon in his buttonhole. He kept his hands behind his back, just as in Rauch's statuette. His complexion was very bright, clear, and rosy. His eyes extraordinarily dark,[1] piercing and brilliant. I felt quite afraid before them, and recollect comparing them to the eyes of the hero of a certain romance called 'Melmoth the Wanderer,' which used to alarm us boys thirty years ago; eyes of an individual who had made a bargain with a Certain Person, and at an extreme old age retained these eyes in all their awful splendour. I fancied Goethe must have been still more handsome as an old man than even in the days of his youth. His voice was very rich and sweet. He asked me questions about myself,

[1] This must have been the effect of the position in which he sat with regard to the light. Goethe's eyes were dark brown, but not very dark.

which I answered as best I could. I recollect I was at first astonished, and then somewhat relieved, when I found he spoke French with not a good accent.

"*Vidi tantum.* I saw him but three times. Once walking in the garden of his house in the *Frauenplan;* once going to step into his chariot on a sunshiny day, wearing a cap and a cloak with a red collar. He was caressing at the time a beautiful little golden-haired granddaughter, over whose sweet fair face the earth has long since closed too.

"Any of us who had books or magazines from England sent them to him, and he examined them eagerly. *Fraser's Magazine* had lately come out, and I remember he was interested in those admirable outline portraits which appeared for awhile in its pages. But there was one, a very ghastly caricature of Mr. Rogers, which, as Madame de Goethe told me, he shut up and put away from him angrily. 'They would make me look like that,' he said; though in truth I can fancy nothing more serene, majestic, and *healthy* looking than the grand old Goethe.

"Though his sun was setting, the sky round about was calm and bright, and that little Weimar illumined by it. In every one of those kind salons the talk was still of Art and Letters, The theatre, though possessing no very extraordinary actors, was still connected with a noble intelligence and order. The actors read books, and were men of letters and gentlemen, holding a not unkindly relationship with the *Adel.* At court the conversation was exceedingly friendly, simple and polished. The grand duchess (the present grand duchess dowager), a lady of very remarkable endowments, would kindly borrow our books from us, lend us her own, and graciously talk to us young men about our literary tastes and pursuits. In the respect paid by this court to the Patriarch of letters, there was something ennobling, I think, alike to the subject and

sovereign. With a five and twenty years' experience since those happy days of which I write, and an acquaintance with an immense variety of human kind, I think I have never seen a society more simple, charitable, courteous, gentlemanlike than that of the dear little Saxon city, where the good Schiller and the great Goethe lived and lie buried.

"Very sincerely yours,

"W. M. THACKERAY."

Thackeray's testimony is not only borne out by all that I learn elsewhere, but is indeed applicable to Weimar in the present day, where the English visitor is received by the reigning grand duke and duchess with exquisite grace of courtesy; and where he still feels that the traditions of the classic period are *living*.

To return to Goethe: His last secretary, Kräuter, who never speaks of him but with idolatry, describes his activity even at this advanced age as something prodigious. It was moreover systematic. A certain time of the day was devoted to his correspondence; then came the arrangement of his papers, or the completion of works long commenced. One fine spring morning, Kräuter tells me Goethe said to him: "Come, we will cease dictation; it is a pity such fine weather should not be enjoyed, let us go into the park and do a bit of work there." Kräuter took the necessary books and papers, and followed his master, who in his long blue overcoat, a blue cap on his head, and his hands in the customary attitude behind his back, marched on, upright and imposing. Those who remember Rauch's statuette will picture to themselves the figure of the old man in his ordinary attitude; but perhaps they cannot fully picture to themselves the imposing effect of that Jupiter-head, which, on this occasion, arrested an old peasant and so absorbed him, that leaning his hands upon his rake, and resting his chin upon his hands, he gazed on

the spectacle in forgetfulness so complete that he did not move out of the way, but stood gazing immovable, while Kräuter had to step aside to pass.

It is usually said indeed that Goethe showed no signs of age; but this is one of the exaggerations which the laxity of ordinary speech permits itself. His intellect preserved a wonderful clearness and activity, as we know; and indeed the man who wrote the essay on Cuvier and Geoffroy's discussion, and who completed the "Faust" in his eighty-second year, may fairly claim a place among the Nestors for whom remains

> "Some work of noble note,
> Not unbecoming men who strove with gods."

But the biographer is bound to record that in his intellect, as in his body, the old man showed unmistakably that he was old. His hearing became noticeably impaired; his memory of recent occurrences was extremely treacherous; yet his eyesight remained strong, and his appetite good. In the later years of his life he presented a striking contrast to the earlier years, in his preference for close rooms. The heated and impure atmosphere of an unventilated room was to him so agreeable that it was difficult to persuade him to have a window open for the purpose of ventilation. Always disliking the cold, and longing for warmth like a child of the south, he sat in rooms so heated that he was constantly taking cold. This did not prevent his enjoyment of the fresh air when he was in the country. The mountain air of Ilmenau, especially, seemed to give him health and enjoyment. It was to Ilmenau he went to escape from the festivities preparing for his last birthday. He ascended the lovely heights of the Gickelhahn, and went into the wood hut where so many happy days had been spent with Karl August. There he saw on the wall those lines he had years before written in pencil, —

"Ueber allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch."

And wiping the tears from his eyes, tears which rose at the memory of Karl August, Charlotte von Stein, and his own happy youth, he repeated the last line, "*Ja, warte nur, balde ruhest du auch* — Yes, wait but a little; thou, too, soon wilt be at rest."

That rest was nearer than any one expected. On the 16th of March following, his grandson Wolfgang, coming into his room as usual to breakfast with him, found him still in bed. The day before, in passing from his heated room across the garden, he had taken cold. The physician on arriving found him very feverish, with what is known in Weimar as the "nervous fever," which acts almost like a pestilence. With the aid of remedies, however, he rallied toward evening, and became talkative and jocose. On the 17th he was so much better that he dictated a long letter to W. von Humboldt. All thought of danger ceased. But during the night of the 19th, having gone off into a soft sleep, he awoke about midnight with hands and feet icy cold, and fierce pain and oppression of the chest. He would not have the physician disturbed, however, for he said there was no danger, only pain. But when the physician came in the morning, he found that a fearful change had taken place. His teeth chattered with the cold. The pain in his chest made him groan, and sometimes call out aloud. He could not rest in one place, but tossed about in bed, seeking in vain a more endurable position. His face was ashen gray; the eyes, deep sunk in the sockets, were dull, and the glance was that of one

conscious of the presence of death. After a time these fearful symptoms were allayed, and he was removed from his bed into the armchair, which stood at his bedside. There, toward evening, he was once more restored to perfect calmness, and spoke with clearness and interest of ordinary matters; especially pleased he was to hear that his appeal for a young artist, a *protégé*, had been successful; and with a trembling hand, he signed an official paper which secured a pension to another artist, a young Weimar lady, for whom he had interested himself.

On the following day, the approach of death was evident. The painful symptoms were gone. But his senses began to fail him, and he had moments of unconsciousness. He sat quiet in the chair, spoke kindly to those around him, and made his servant bring Salvandy's "Seize Mois, ou la Révolution et les Révolutionnaires," which he had been reading when he fell ill; but after turning over the leaves, he laid it down, feeling himself too ill to read. He bade them bring him the list of all the persons who had called to inquire after his health, and remarked that such evidence of sympathy must not be forgotten when he recovered. He sent every one to bed that night, except his copyist. He would not even allow his old servant to sit up with him, but insisted on his lying down to get the rest so much needed.

The following morning — it was the 22d March, 1832 — he tried to walk a little up and down the room, but, after a turn, he found himself too feeble to continue. Reseating himself in the easy chair, he chatted cheerfully with Ottilie on the approaching Spring, which would be sure to restore him. He had no idea of his end being so near.

The name of Ottilie was frequent on his lips. She sat beside him, holding his hand in both of hers. It was now observed that his thoughts began to wander

symptoms of the presence of death. After a [illegible] these fearful symptoms were allayed, and he was removed from his bed into the armchair, which stood at his bedside. There, toward evening, he was [illegible] to perfect calmness and quiet, and spoke with [illegible] and interest of ordinary matters; especially pleased he was to hear that his appeal for a pension, or privilege, had been successful, and with trembling hand he signed an official paper which secured a pension to another artist, a young Weimar lady, for whom he had interested himself.

On the following day, the approach of death was evident. The painful symptoms were gone. But he [illegible] begin to fall like, and he had [illegible] He sat quiet in the chair, spoke kindly to those around him, and made his servant bring Schlosser's "Histoire Moderne, ou la Révolution et les Révolutionnaires," which he had been reading when he fell ill, and after turning over the leaves, he felt a little feeling himself fit to read. He made them [illegible] the list of all the persons who had called to inquire after his health, and remarked that such evidences of sympathy could not be forgotten when he recovered. He was every one to feel that light, [illegible] his coming. He would not even allow his old servant to sit up with him, but insisted on his lying down to get the rest so much needed.

The following morning—it was the 22d March, 1832—he tried to walk a little up and down the room, but, after a time, he found himself too feeble to continue. Resuming himself in the easy chair, he chatted cheerfully with Ottilie on the approaching Spring, which would be sure to restore him. He had no idea of his end being so near.

The name of Ottilie was frequent on his lips. She sat beside him, holding his hand in both of hers. It was soon observed that his thoughts began to wander

"More light"

Photogravure from the painting by F. Fleischer

incoherently. "See," he exclaimed, "the lovely woman's head — with black curls — in splendid colours — a dark background!" Presently he saw a piece of paper on the floor, and asked them how they could leave Schiller's letters so carelessly lying about. Then he slept softly, and on awakening, asked for the sketches he had just seen. These were the sketches seen in a dream.

In silent anguish the close now so surely approaching was awaited. His speech was becoming less and less distinct. The last words audible were: *More light!* The final darkness grew apace, and he whose eternal longings had been for more Light, gave a parting cry for it, as he was passing under the shadow of death.

He continued to express himself by signs, drawing letters with his forefinger in the air, while he had strength, and finally, as life ebbed, drawing figures slowly on the shawl which covered his legs. At half-past twelve he composed himself in the corner of the chair. The watcher placed a finger on her lip to intimate that he was asleep. If sleep it was, it was a sleep in which a great life glided from the world.

Appendix

GOETHE EXPLODED.[1]

(From the *Pall Mall Gazette*, October 4, 1869.)

It is enough to sicken the soul and turn one's hair gray to see the frantic efforts of our time, not so much to "investigate" as to "find out." We have no objection to the exegete and the scholiast of the period. He is a worthy and useful member of society. His remarks may not be very brilliant, his mind may be none of the largest, but he plods away over his author, young or old, good or bad, and produces in due time his honestly begotten tome. But what we do abominate is that morbid hankering to startle the world with some revelation or other about the productions of some of the proudest and greatest of its men, to "show up," to "explode" them, to prove that their noblest efforts, the things for which we honour their memories, belong in fact to the genius of some obscure, deluded woman. Poor thing! Our great man not only robbed her of her affections, but of her work, her glory, her wages. And she knows it; and though he be long dead, she is silent — like a woman. But justice slumbers not. Mrs. A., in time, makes the acquaintance of a young and aspiring writer, and one day they walk in the garden; the clouds are gathering in the west; if they are Germans they say "Du" to each other (though she may be as old as his great-grandmother); and he quotes poetry, and she listens

[1] See page 347.

strangely. And of a sudden he looks at her fixedly, and, seized with a sudden prophetic inspiration, says, "*Thou art the poet:* this song, supposed to be (say) Goethe's, it is thine! it is thine!" And she, blushing, looks as if there were a struggle in her breast; she looks as if she wanted to say something, and at last she does say something. "Yes, I did write this little song, but pray don't tell anybody. I wrote many another thing too which *he* afterward called his. But *pray* don't tell anybody." Proof she has none. Yes, she has a handkerchief of that larcenous poet's, and certain letters, and an embossed wax picture, and, oh! many more relics. And the young littérateur forthwith sits down and indites a "sensational," or, rather, a "sentimental," and sends it to press. And while he is busy with the proof-sheet his friends speak in little paragraphs of the tremendous Goethe discovery that has been made by Herr Hermann Grimm.

We have blurted out the story. Yes, Hermann Grimm, under the modest signature of H. G., has given a Goethe revelation to the world, and he has come by it pretty much in the way above described. It is to be found in full in a recent number of the *Preussische Jahrbücher*. Goethe, according to him, has misappropriated a woman's poems in the "West-östlicher Divan." We confess we would fain have silenced this affair to death — *stillgeschwiegen*, as the Germans have most wisely attempted — if to do so were in our power. What to us is most painful about it is the fact that a writer of Grimm's standing should so far have yielded to an impulse of righteousness, let us call it, as to overlook the absurd position he was preparing for himself. The worst part, however, is this; that, being without the faintest trace of proof for the assertion he brings forward, he actually dares to hint that Goethe must have stolen a great deal more than Hermann Grimm has heard of.

bright and moving gray-blue eyes, and said, 'Stop; what makes you repeat that poem?' 'Oh, it just came to me so vividly,' I answered; 'it is one of Goethe's most beautiful ones.' Marianne still continued to look at me, as if she wanted to say something, but could not make up her mind to do so. 'I will tell you something,' I called out suddenly, without knowing how I came to do it: 'This poem is *yours* — *you* made it!' This supposition was, after all, not so very much out of the way. That part of the 'Divan' is almost entirely kept up like a duet, and I knew besides what a large share Marianne had had, *generally speaking*, in the production of these poems. [Is not this delicious?] 'You must not tell it to anybody,' she began again after a time, holding out her hand to me. 'Yes, I did make those verses.' And yet it was a *surprise* (!) to me. She then ended the conversation, and the next morning was the day of her departure. She was expected at Neuburg, near Heidelberg. From that place I had a letter, in which, for the first time, she expressed herself more openly upon her relations with Goethe.

"'Frau von Stein,' she wrote, 'I never knew; I was never in Weimar, and saw Goethe first at Frankfort in the year '14. During a visit he paid us in the country, from the 12th of August till the 6th of October, 1815, I got to know him, and to love him, and till four weeks before his death I was in constant correspondence with him. But his letters were quite different to those he wrote to Frau von Stein, and it seems to me a fatal piece of indiscretion that they should have been printed. About six or eight weeks before Goethe's death he sent me a neatly tied-up packet, and wrote to me at the same time most affectionately, saying that he sent me herewith my letters, and begged me to keep the packet unopened until the *uncertain hour* which, alas, must but too

soon strike. In the very hour that I was told of his death I broke the seal, and found at once some lines in his own handwriting. They are in the new edition, and I wish to impose upon you the task of finding them.' There was no difficulty about this. The poem is to be found among the posthumous ones (vii. 219): 'Vor die Augen meiner Lieben,' etc., Weimar, March 3, 1831.

"Remarkably enough (Marianne pointed this out to me), these lines were written after the death of Frau von Stein. 'You will be surprised,' she writes to me later (February 18, 1852), 'that I do not possess Eckermann, and have not read him for a long time, but am just in the third volume of Goethe's letters to the "Stein." You will find at the end, on the last leaf, the last page but one, the beginning of those lines which Goethe sent me with my letters, and which were certainly written on the 3d of March, 1831 — therefore after the death of the "Stein." But this must remain, as always, between ourselves.' Marianne would, I am sure, have approved its not remaining between ourselves. (! !) She had intended to leave to me her correspondence with Goethe, though from the beginning I had begged her not to do so. I had apprehended the responsibilty which would grow out of such a possession. Finally she changed her mind about it, and the letters are to remain deposited at the Frankfort town library till the twentieth year after her death.

"In another letter she returned again to the subject of our conversation in the garden. 'In the "Divan"' (she writes, April 5, 1856) 'you must not sift anything; I have nothing on my conscience but the "Ost und Westwinde," "Hochbeglückt in deiner Liebe," and "Sag du hast wohl viel gedichtet." But much of it I have inspired, suggested, and *experienced.* I think I promised you the original of the "Westwind;" it

differs very little from the printed version, but still significantly. May this leaf be a leaf of spring to you, and greet you stormily, for such a storm blows here as we have not had for long.'

"On the 21st of January, 1857, she writes still more to the point:

"'I send you with this letter the lines that you asked for; after all there is only one which G. altered, and I really do not know why, for I think my own are really more beautiful; and so as not to disappoint your expectations too greatly, I also send you a few small bits which then formed the greatest charm of our correspondence, in which the *secret* could not but be an essential ingredient. Those which I have marked out are from the "Divan" of Hafis. . . . Now when you read in the "Divan" the beautiful poem "Geheimschrift," "Lasst euch, o Diplomaten," it will no longer be a "secret-writing" to you, and I again have told you something more about the happiest time of my life. But why I should do so just this evening, when I have already been struggling for an hour with a bad pen and worse ink, is just because — etc. This has excited me so much that I resolved to write to you at once, and send you this inclosure, which I looked for a few days ago. I am possessed with the feeling that I shall soon be no longer able to write to you, so I want to make up for lost time, and begin by sending you this sheet. Keep true to me, *and be discreet*, and remember the little grandmother. M. W.

"'P. S. — As your having the Hafis is uncertain, I send you this little sheet, which contains the said passages by myself, and also some of Goethe's. It is a trifle, I well know, and you must forgive me for troubling you with it. Good morning.'

"It seems to me" (writes Grimm) "no breach of faith to publish these innocent things now, almost ten years after Marianne's death. She herself wishes that her letters to Goethe, which she showed to no one, should appear after twice that time. I do not know whether I should be able to write down these things later. (?) Her wish for secrecy referred chiefly to judgments on living persons, which were contained in her letters, and which, if they had gone further, might have made mischief, and could now have been of no interest. Inclosed in this letter was a small sheet, on one side of which was written: 'Ostwind, Wiedersehn d. 6. October 15.' 'Was bedeutet die Bewegung?' etc., the poem to be found in the original edition of the 'West-östlicher Divan,' p. 161. Goethe has *changed* the fourth stanza, making it more passionate [did it never strike Herr Grimm that the process might have been reversed, and that Frau von Willemer made it into Goethe-and-water in her copy ?], and not to its advantage either, to my thinking.

"On the other side of the leaf stood the other poem, 'Ach, um deine feuchten Schwingen,' etc., but in this Goethe has *altered* very little. 'Hochbeglückt in deiner Liebe,' which Marianne further confessed to, stands at page 125 in the 'Divan' under the title of 'Suleika;' and 'Sag du hast wohl viel gedichtet,' at page 132, under the same title. These details are important, as showing, though she had so large a share in the 'Divan,' how little the work was familiar to her as a printed book. [This is very confused.] Marianne had almost put into my hands the copy given her by Goethe, but withdrew it again because she could not part with it."

We confess not quite to understand the force of all this. But such is this precious revelation, such are the proofs alleged. Scraps of confused speeches and more confused letters from an infatuated old lady (however

charming at one time) are to convince us that Goethe knowingly committed petty larceny, coolly stole some of the most exquisite jewels in his crown from the young dancer who loved him? But what shall we say of what follows?—

"As she says" (Grimm adds) "that she has inspired much besides (which she may have forgotten) we may *surely attribute to her* some others of the poems bearing the title of 'Suleika.' For instance, 'Als ich auf dem Euphrat schiffte,' where the last stanza *no doubt* was originally something different:

"'Also träumt' ich, Morgenröthe
Blitzt ins Auge durch den Baum,
Sag Poete, sage *Goethe*,
Was bedeutet dieser Traum?'

"Simrock first drew attention to the necessary alteration here of Hatem into Goethe, which seems quite as natural as in the poem 'Hatem,' page 149:

"'Du beschämst wie Morgenröthe,
Jener Gipfel ernste Wand,
Und noch einmal fühlet Goethe
Frühlingshauch und Sommerbrand.'

"The poem 'Geheimschrift' follows at page 173. And immediately afterward, as an answer to the 'Abglanz,' page 175, the poem entitled 'Suleika,' page 177. 'Wie mit innigstem Behagen,' etc. At the same time, Marianne *says nothing of it.* It almost seems to me as if with a certain prudence she wished not to betray the full extent of her share in the 'Divan.' In time, however, her letters will bring this to light. It is also clear that her memory occasionally failed her. We must not forget that Marianne was over seventy when she made these communications to me."

No, we will not forget it. Neither shall we forget that it is a scion of the Grimms, himself distinguished as a writer, who has thus dared to bring such a charge before the world — a charge suggested (let us not forget this either) by himself to that dear and queer old lady of Frankfort.

THE END.

832.62 Goethe, J.W.von. 439773
KD66 [Works, Ed.by N.H.Dole. [v.8, Life,
v.8 by Lewes, v.2.
v.2

NAME	DATE	NAME	DATE
Peterson			

439773

Stanford University Libraries
3 6105 014 156 488